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The Nature of the Course Team Approach at the UK Open University

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BA MEd

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in Educational Technology

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Abstract

This thesis explores the nature of the course team approach at the UK Open University (UKOU) by investigating three issues: the formations of course teams, the process of working together in teams and the development of courses by teams.

Adopting the naturalist paradigm, data were collected from three course teams of the UKOU using observations, interviews and documents. Altogether, 42 hours of observations were carried out over six months by observing 14 course team meetings. There were 28 hours of interview data from 21 interviews of 17 interviewees. A range of documents was collected.

The study found that the formation of course teams is regulated by course approval protocol, and is derived from the effort of individual members. The responsibility of core academic course team members is vaguely demarcated. Academic's personal attributes are a key to team organisation. Previous experience of working together influences the members' current work in teams.

In the process of working together as a team in meetings, the study shows that the agendas of course team meetings often include practical issues. The course team meetings are flooded with practical concerns with pedagogical concerns remaining in the background.

The development of courses by course teams, as this study shows, is framed by the system for course construction established by the University. An awareness of changing external environment contributes to the development of courses. There are differing views on the academic autonomy of academic course team members.

Theorising of major findings leads to conclude that both course teams and their work are contextualised because they interact with systemic, interpersonal, personal and historical contexts. Therefore, the suggestions to the successful adoption of the course team approach emphasize academic's attributes, teamwork and the system for course construction set up by the institution.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Introduction

This study explores the nature of the course team approach at the UK Open University (UKOU). Rather than looking at the methods used for course development by course teams, this study examines the reality of formulating course teams and working together in course teams. From analysing what has actually happened to course teams, the nature of the course team approach at the UKOU is identified.

This is an empirical study adopting a naturalist paradigm. Data has been collected by observing course team meetings, interviewing course team members and searching relevant documents. The researcher, an academic staff of an open university outside the UK, conducted this study while she was an overseas research student of the UKOU. She is a practitioner in the field, and she looked at the practice of UKOU's course teams through her foreign eyes.

This chapter, as the starting point of the thesis, draws the whole picture of the study. It begins by describing the motivations to conduct the study. It next addresses the

importance of the study, followed by a general description of the study. The chapter ends with an outline of the structure of the thesis. In summary, this chapter consists of the following four parts.

- Motivations to conduct the study
- Importance of the study
- Overview of the study
- Structure of the thesis

1.2 Motivations to conduct the study

In the field of open and distance education, the course team approach is well known by the course teams of the UKOU. A course team of the UKOU is traditionally composed of the subject matter specialist, the educational technologist, the electronic media specialist, the editor, the staff tutor, the course manager and the secretary. According to UKOU's first vice-chancellor, the use of course teams to develop courses is one of the most important contributions that the University has made (Perry, 1976). Many 'distance teaching universities' -- for instance, the Dutch Open Universiteit, the Deakin University in Australia, the Allama Iqbal Open University in Pakistan, the Sukhothai Thammathirat Open University in Thailand, the Korean National Open University and the University of South Africa -- use teams to develop courses. While there are also other models in practice, such as the model of the FernUniversität in Germany in which courses are produced in a kind of relaxed and flexible collaboration between teaching staff and educational technologists (Peters, 1998), it is apparent that the course team approach is widely adopted in the field. Judged by Peters (1998, pp.71-72), there is no other form of academic teaching in which students are supported with the help that course teams provide. According to Peters, the course team model has been successful. Since course teams are so important for the practice of open and distance education, there is a need to explore the nature of the course team approach.

Although course teams can easily be seen in distance teaching institutions, the issue of course teams has only mainly been discussed in 1970s and 1980s. Within them, there are only a few examples of empirical research. Afterwards, the issue has not become the focus of academic research. However, more and more course teams have been set up in the world. For improving the widespread practice, the thorough investigations which lead to the theorisation of the nature of the course team approach are really needed.

Back to the National Open University (NOU) in Taiwan, Republic of China (ROC), where the researcher is a faculty member. The NOU has been using course teams to develop courses since the University was born in 1986. The researcher has, during her time of working at the University, observed the emergence of various problems of the course teams. For instance, the University only exerts little control over the quality of its courses that are developed mainly by the academics who are not the permanent staff of the University. Although the inclusion of famous experts outside the campus enhances the prestige of the courses, and thereby attract more students, it is difficult for the University to monitor their work closely. The lack of discussions between team members is another problem. It is quite common that academic team members produce their course materials alone with only a couple of team meetings held. They usually handover their manuscripts directly to the University without being commented by other team members. It is apparent that team efforts are not enough. A course team in this sense is just a gathering of academics. Moreover, the lack of understanding of the theories of open and distance education makes NOU's course materials only in the form of textbooks. Almost all of them are mainly the accumulation of knowledge. It can thus be said that the operation of the NOU's course teams needs improvements. One way to raise the quality of the work of NOU's course teams is to learn, particularly by its own staff, how other successful distance teaching universities run their course teams. This implies a deep understanding of the nature of the course team approach.

1.3 Importance of the study

This study is important to the following four areas or groups: (1) to the field of open and distance education, (2) to the field of higher education, (3) to the UKOU and (4) to the practice of open and distance education in Taiwan.

First, the importance of the study to the field of open and distance education can be seen from the purpose of carrying out the study, i.e., to understand the nature of the course team approach. This inquiry shows the intention to theorise the phenomenon of course teams. Holmberg (1995) in his articulation of theory and practice of distance education addressed the issue of course teams in his discussion on administering course development. The inclusion indicates the wide use of the course team approach in the field. However, only several articles -- e.g., Hawkrigde (1994), Mason and Goodenough (1981), Smith (1980) and Tansley (1989) -- identify, based on authors' expert knowledge, the use of various types of teams for course development in distance education. Only a small body of literature -- for example, Borremans (1996), Drake (1979), Mason (1976), Newey (1975), Tight (1985) and Wright (1988) -- reflects their own course team experiences. Limited studies -- such as, Nicodemus (1984) and Riley (1983) -- investigate certain aspects of the process of drafting course materials by course team members. Therefore, the gap between the practice of course teams and the theorisation of the course team approach still exists. In other words, the theoretical understanding of the course team approach generated from an empirical-research base is lacking. It is thus expected that this study will provide insights into the nature of the course team approach, which can inform the policy making in relation to the use of course teams.

Second, the importance of the study to the field of higher education can be seen from the recent extension of educational provision of conventional higher education institutions by including distance teaching provision. Becher and Kogan (1992) in their model of the system of British higher education treat the course team as one of the basic units of the system. This indicates their recognition of the existence of course teams in higher

education institutions. However, Becher's (1989) in-depth examination of the academic life in higher education institutions in UK did not highlight the academics in course teams. This implies that the academics in course teams were not put into the main category of the academics in higher education at that time. In this decade, academics in course teams call more attention from higher education institutions since conventional higher education institutions following the rapid development of information and communication technology start to provide distance education. The convergence of distance and conventional education (Tait & Mills, 1999) encourages the academics in conventional educational institutions to move into the arena that used to be monopolised by distance education. These academics soon face the challenge of course construction and consequently need to consider the use of course teams. Thus, it is hoped that this study which investigates the nature of the course team approach can make useful suggestions for these higher education institutions on the adoption of the course team approach.

Third, the importance of the study to the UKOU mainly lies in the management of course teams. Although the UKOU's courses are, from the early days of the University till now, completely developed by course teams, the issue of course teams was only heavily debated in 1970s and 1980s. Since the University still uses course teams to develop courses, it needs to know more about its course teams. Therefore, this study which is conducted by looking at UKOU's course teams can provide a real picture of the teams. From this study, the policy maker of the UKOU can re-examine the issue of course teams.

Finally, the importance of the study to the practice of open and distance education in Taiwan, ROC, can be understood from the way that the open universities operate there. Since 1997, there are two open universities in Taiwan (Chung, 1999). For them, the provision of courses is the main work. Regarding the NOU's course teams, they are different from the UKOU's course teams in membership and in working pattern. To raise the quality of course materials there, the operation of NOU's course teams needs to be improved. It is assumed that this study which investigates the nature of the course team

approach by examining the course teams of the UKOU can provide the kind of help that the practice of open and distance education in Taiwan needs.

1.4 Overview of the study

This study explores the nature of the course team approach at the UKOU. Rather than looking at the methods used for course development by course teams, this study examines the reality of formulating course teams and working together in course teams. From analysing what has actually happened to course teams, the nature of the course team approach at the UKOU is identified. There are three foci in this study:

- (1) the formation of course teams
- (2) the process of working together as a team in course team meetings
- (3) the development of courses by course teams

The exploration of the formation of course teams provides insights into the organisation of course teams, the distribution of responsibility in course teams and the interpersonal relationships between course team members. The investigation into the process of working together in course team meetings shows -- by examining the agendas as well as the actual discussions in course team meetings -- how people function together as a team. The analysis of the development of courses by course teams highlights the influence of the system for course construction set up by the University to course team work, the influences of external environments and the different views on the academic autonomy of an academic course team member.

This study adopted a naturalist paradigm. The researcher, as an overseas research student of the UKOU, stayed on the campus of the UKOU in most of the time during the course of conducting the study. Data were gathered from observations, interviews and documentary sources. The course teams of three undergraduate courses in the School of Education of the UKOU were investigated. Two were in the early stage of course

development and one had already completed the work of course development.

Altogether, there were four types of data, which are summarised as follows:

- (1) *Observation of course team meetings*: In total, 42 hours of observations were carried out over six months by observing 14 course team meetings of two course teams.
- (2) *Interviewing core course team members*: A total of 17 interviews of 13 core course team members from three course teams were conducted. There are altogether 22 hours of this type of data.
- (3) *Interviewing academic staff outside the course teams*: This study interviewed the UKOU's academic staff who were experienced in course team work but were not the team members of the three course teams. These interviews were conducted before and after the fieldwork in order to gather background information of the UKOU's course teams and to examine the provisional conclusions generated from the fieldwork. There were altogether four such interviews from four interviewees, which lasted for six hours.
- (4) *Documentary sources*: A range of documents -- such as meeting agendas and minutes, archive material, internal documents, research reports, publicity booklets etc. -- was collected and analysed.

This study attempts to explore the nature of the course team approach at the UKOU by investigating what has really happened in course teams and what the course team members have thought about their teams and their work. The conclusions are thus grounded in what has been seen as well as what has been heard in the research setting, not merely in what official documents have stated. It is hoped that by studying the course teams and their work the nature of the course team approach at the UKOU which is reputed to have introduced the approach to the field can be identified.

1.5 Structure of the thesis

This thesis consists of eight chapters.

Chapter 1 is the introduction of the thesis. It begins by explaining the motivations to conduct the study. It next points out the importance of the study. Afterwards, it draws the overview of the study. It ends by outlining the structure of the thesis.

Chapter 2 reviews the relevant literature with an attempt to link the study to the existing understanding of the field. The chapter reviews the literature on the 'distance teaching university', the system for course construction at a distance teaching university, course development in distance education and the teams for course development. In other words, this chapter attempts to provide the background knowledge to fieldwork.

Chapter 3 provides a methodological account. Within the chapter, the methodology of the study is explained. The actual work carried out in the phases of pre-fieldwork, fieldwork and post-fieldwork is described and justified.

Chapter 4 sets the scene of the study by introducing the UKOU. In order to response to the data collected from observations and interviews, this chapter, based on the analysis of document data, mainly discusses the features of UKOU's courses. There is a particular reference to its undergraduate courses as well as a special focus on the undergraduate courses provided by the School of Education. Moreover, the system for course construction set up by the University is introduced. This includes the overview of the course construction process and the official procedures for constructing a course at the UKOU.

Chapters 5, 6 and 7 are mainly concerned with the analyses of interview and observation data.

Chapter 5 deals with the formation of course teams. It covers the birth of a course team, the organisation of course teams, the distribution of responsibility in a course team and the interpersonal relationships between course team members.

Chapter 6 looks at the process of working together as a team in course team meetings. Firstly, it analyses the agendas of course team meetings. Secondly, it shows how people in course team meetings actually discuss the agenda items together.

Chapter 7 focuses on the development of courses by course teams. It analyses course team members' experiences of working in the University's system for course construction. It discusses academic's main concerns on the formation of courses. It also identifies different views on working together as a team, which link to the views on academic autonomy.

Chapter 8 provides a discussion of results followed by conclusions of the study. Firstly, the major findings produced in previous chapters are discussed. Based on the findings, the conclusions of the study are theorised. It is claimed that course teams as well as their work interact with systemic, interpersonal, personal and historical contexts. This study thus concludes that both course teams and their work are contextualised. The suggestions to the successful adoption of the course team approach emphasize academic's attributes, teamwork and the system for course construction set up by the institution. The chapter ends by presenting the reflections on the conduct of the study. They include the implications of the study for policy making, the contributions of the study and the suggestions to further studies.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

This chapter reviews literature with an attempt to draw the boundary of the study and to form the basis for the fieldwork. To respond to the research issue, the literature reviewed in this chapter focuses on the course team for course development in the system for course provision at a distance teaching university.

This review covers four areas. First, it sketches the profile of the 'distance teaching university'. Second, it reviews the system for course provision at a distance teaching university. The chapter then reviews the literature on course development, followed by a review on teams for course development. In summary, this chapter consists of the following four main parts.

- General background of the distance teaching university
- System for course provision at a distance teaching university
- Course development in distance education
- Teams for course development

2.2 General background of the distance teaching university

The 'distance teaching university' is a particular type of practice in distance education. Regarding 'distance education', it is currently one of the most popular educational notions in the world. It originates from 'correspondence education' in which teaching is mainly provided via post. Following both the developments of media and technology and the shifted focus from teaching to learning, the term of 'correspondence education' is now hardly used and it is displaced by the terms such as 'distance education' or 'open and distance education'. In order to provide the general background of the distance teaching university, this section is divided into the following two parts.

- Sketch of the practice in the field of distance education
- Profile of the distance teaching university

2.2.1 *Sketch of the practice in the field of distance education*

To sketch the practice in the field of distance education, firstly the notion of 'distance education' is defined. Secondly, the types of practice are categorised. (see below)

- notion of 'distance education'
- types of practice

Regarding the notion of 'distance education', Keegan (1986), analysing the existing literature, proposed a definition of distance education in his book called '*Foundations of Distance Education*'. After the book was first published in 1986, his definition aroused follow-up discussions, e.g., Garrison and Baynton (1987), Keegan (1988) and Daniel (1996). Nevertheless, it has been widely cited. Responding to discussions, Keegan revised his definition of distance education and included electronic methods in the latest edition of his book (Keegan, 1996, p.50). His definition of distance education now comprises the following five characteristics.

- (1) quasi-permanent separation of teacher and learner throughout the duration of the learning process;

- (2) the influence of an educational organization both in the planning and preparation of learning materials and in the provision of student support services;
- (3) the use of technical media -- print, audio, video or computer -- to unite teacher and learner and carry the content of the course;
- (4) the provision of two-way communication so that the student may benefit from or even initiate dialogue;
- (5) the quasi-permanent absence of the learning group throughout the duration of the learning process so that people are usually taught as individuals rather than in groups, with the possibility of occasional meetings, either face-to-face or by electronic means, for both didactic and socialization purposes.

Keegan explained that the above definition distinguishes distance education from conventional face-to-face education (characteristic 1), from private study and teach-yourself programmes (characteristic 2), and from other uses of technology in education (characteristic 4). It can be said that Keegan's definition comprises the essential features of distance education.

Jarvis (1995, pp.159-162) analysed distance education from a sociological point of view by examining the relationship between distance education and society. By applying Giddens's analysis of contemporary society, he argued that distance education can be seen as a form of education that epitomises the following five signs of late modernity: (1) industrial-capitalism, (2) space-time distancing, (3) disembedded mechanisms and expert system, (4) reflexivity and (5) individuation. This is because a distance course or study package is a marketable commodity which is technologically produced within a capitalist economy. Since learning/teaching in distance education is mainly mediated and is not dominated by 'presence', distance education symbolises the process of space-time distancing. Distance teaching institution can be experienced as the disembedded mechanisms and as expert systems through which learners are facilitated in any place and at any time. Following the constant change of technologies, the mode of production and distribution of distance education materials is continuously altered. People can continue their education individually by taking the opportunity provided by distance education.

Jarvis's analysis of distance education, as a mode of education that fits many characteristics of late modernity and can be regarded as a symbol of this form of society, captures some characteristic features of contemporary distance education. It thus provides an alternative perspective to view the nature of distance education.

Keegan (1996, p.38) added that the notion of distance education should comprise the following two domains.

- Distance teaching
- Distance learning

Although 'distance teaching' is traditionally highly emphasized because it takes so much energy to construct a course in distance education, Keegan particularly addressed 'distance learning'. His thinking obtained support from others, e.g., Snell et al. (1987) who claimed that there is an apparent move: 'beyond distance teaching -- towards open learning'. In contemporary society, open learning has already integrated with distance education. The field has now been named as 'open and distance education', although the distance education and open learning systems are different -- the former refers to systems of delivery while the latter tends to be used to describe certain forms of access and curricula (Calder & McCollum, 1998; Lewis, 1986; Rumble, 1989).

In present study, the terms 'distance education' and 'open and distance education' are used interchangeably in the rest of this thesis. 'Distance teaching' is the main focus.

With respect to the types of practice in the field of distance education, there are many different forms (Bates, 1995; Holmberg, 1995; Kaye & Rumble, 1981a; Keegan, 1996, 1986; Keegan & Rumble, 1982a; Peters, 1998, 1971; Rumble, 1986), which show the diversity of the field. Since the field grows rapidly, the typology needs to be refined constantly. The practice in the field of distance education is, in this study, divided into the following four groups.

- (1) *Single-mode institutions*: They are purposely built exclusively for distance education. 'Distance teaching universities' (or 'open universities', e.g., the

UKOU) as well as correspondence schools (e.g., the Correspondence School in New Zealand) belong to this category.

- (2) *Dual-mode institutions*: These institutions not only teach on-campus students like conventional teaching institutions; but they also offer courses at a distance to off-campus students. In many conventional institutions in the USA and Canada, there are distance education departments (or independent study divisions) set up within the campus. A unique example is the University of New England in Australia, which integrates internal and external teaching together.
- (3) *Networked educational practices*: They include the collaborative arrangements between organisations that offer the integrated programmes of studies through open and distance learning, e.g., the Western Interstate Commission of Higher Education in USA (i.e., a collaboration between fifteen states in 1995 in the Western USA). There are even properly established consortia which are groupings of educational and other structures constituted for the organisation of distance education, e.g., the National Technological University in the USA (which links forty-seven universities in 1996 offering both non-credit courses and the courses in undergraduate and postgraduate levels by satellite).
- (4) *Workplace training*: The vocational training in commerce and industry is provided by adopting distance teaching and open learning methods.

The recent development in the field is signified by the development in the latter three types of practice. In general, the use of the Internet for education as well as the provision of resource-based learning (Patel, etc., 2000) is the trend in contemporary distance education. Triggered by the advance of information and communication technology, a wide range of conventional educational institutions has already adopted computer-based communication known as 'telematics' to provide education. In higher education, Jenkins (1995) detected a substantial increase in the number of universities providing distance education. Additionally, 'the virtual university' (Philson, 1997) has emerged that shows a new type of networked distance educational institution. This initiative broadens the practice of university-level distance teaching. On the other hand, vocational education

and training is also widely provided by using the notion of open and flexible learning (Calder & McCollum, 1998) in current society. The merge between conventional education (and training) and distance education blurs their demarcation (Tait & Mills, 1999).

Different types of practice show that distance education is provided not only at all academic levels (from school to post-graduate levels) but it also aims for career (in technical and vocational levels). Distance education is provided not only in the private sector (in the form of work-based training) but it is also offered in the public sector (in universities and schools). Courses offered in distance mode can be either with credits leading to the grant of educational qualifications or they are non-credit courses. The wide scope of the practice implies that distance education continues to extend its contributions to the society. To gain a proper understanding of distance education thus becomes much urgent.

Although there are various practices in the field of distance education, the 'distance teaching university' always has a particular position in the field. The following section thus draws the profile of the distance teaching university.

2.2.2 Profile of the distance teaching university

The 'distance teaching university' is basically featured by 'autonomy'. It is suggested (Neil, 1981, referred by Keegan, 1996, p.130) that the autonomy of the distance teaching university shows in the following four aspects: (1) finance; (2) examination and accreditation; (3) curriculum and materials; and (4) delivery and student support systems.

Compared with the autonomous correspondence school, the distance teaching university is different in the following three ways: the level of provision, the use of media and the more comprehensive link between learning materials and potential learning (Keegan, 1996, pp.135-136). In other words, the distance teaching university basically provides university-level courses, although some distance teaching universities provide

programmes at other levels as well. It is assumed that the distance teaching university has a more extensive use of educational media. Moreover, the distance teaching university is viewed as providing a more coherent link between learning materials and learning.

Which universities are distance teaching universities? Based on the database of ICDL (1998) and the studies of Daniel (1996), Harry (1999), Keegan (1994a), Rumble (1992) and Keegan and Rumble (1982a), the names of existing distance teaching universities are compiled and listed in table 2-1. Within them, there are eleven 'mega-universities' defined by Daniel (1996, p.29) and which individually have over 100,000 active students in degree-level courses.

What are the features of the distance teaching university? Rumble and Keegan (1982, pp.222-223) highlighted the following eight characteristics: (1) a conscious and systematic approach to the design of learning materials; (2) the use of a wide range of media and other resources; (3) a marked role-differentiation among staff; (4) the centralised course design/production and the localised learning; (5) a distinct division of labour among academic staff; (6) the need to organise and control both occasional face-to-face tuition and the provision of two-way communication between students and tutors; (7) the need to have appropriate management techniques and a hierarchical government structure of management and control, based on the existence of quasi-industrial processes; and (8) the extensive administrative areas which need to be well defined. In general, they investigate the features of the distance teaching university from various angles -- not only in terms of teaching and learning but also in terms of administration and management. The coverage of this analysis is comparatively wide.

It is apparent that the distance teaching university has certain strengths. Rumble (1992, p.33) claimed that the autonomous distance teaching university is favoured by some countries based on their following four considerations. (1) The establishment of an autonomous distance teaching university is necessary because the development and management of distance education need particular administrative structures which campus-based universities do not have. (2) It is better to have a kind of distance education institution that can be wholly dedicated to the needs of part-time adult distance

[Table 2- 1] List of Distance Teaching Universities

• University of South Africa	South Africa	1951	
• Open University	UK	1969	
• Universidad Nacional de Educación a Distancia	Spain	1972	
• FernUniversität	Germany	1974	
• Open University of Israel (formerly 'Everyman's University')	Israel	1974	
• Allama Iqbal Open University (formerly 'People's Open University')	Pakistan	1975	
• Athabasca University (as re-constituted)	Canada	1975	
• Universidad Nacional Abierta	Venezuela	1977	
• Universidad Estatal a Distancia	Costa Rica	1977	
• Sukhothai Thammathirat Open University	Thailand	1978	
• Radio and Television Universities	People's Republic of China	1979	The China TV university system is made up of the central unit, the China Central Broadcasting and TV University. The system comprises 44 provincial TVUs.
• Open University of Sri Lanka	Sri Lanka	1980	
• Open Universiteit	Netherlands	1981	
• Korea National Open University (formerly 'Korea Air and Correspondent University')	South Korea	1981	
• Dr B R Ambedkar Open University (previously 'Andhra Pradesh Open University')	India	1982	
• University of the Air	Japan	1983	
• Universitas Terbuka	Indonesia	1984	
• Indira Gandhi National Open University	India	1985	
• Al-Quds Open University	Palestine	1985	It started its operations in Palestine in 1991.
• National Open University	Republic of China (on Taiwan)	1986	
• Payame Noor University	Iran	1987	
• Kota Open University	India	1987	
• Nalanda Open University	India	1987	
• Yashwantrao Chavan Maharashtra Open University	India	1989	
• Open University of Hong Kong (formerly 'Open Learning Institute of Hong Kong')	Hong Kong	1989	
• Sabana Open University	Colombia	1971	
• Télé-université	Canada	1972	
• Open Learning Agency	Canada		
• Otvorená Univerzita Slovenska (Open University of Slovakia)	Slovak Republic	1992	
• Open University of Tanzania	Tanzania	1992	
• University of Distance Education	Myanmar (Bruma)	1992	
• University of the Philippines Open University	Philippines	1995	
• Bangladesh Open University	Bangladesh	1992	
• Jutland Open University	Denmark		It is an integrated part of the 'mother university' Aarhus University.
• University of the Russia's Academy of Education (former Russia's Open University)	Russia	1995	

students. (3) The strengths of the distance teaching university are mainly rooted in the technology and processes of materials development together with the delivery of support services to distant students. (4) Economies on a greater scale can be achieved from a distance teaching university than from a conventional university that teaches on-campus.

However, Rumble (1992) on the other hand warned that the distance teaching university is facing competition from the dual-mode university. This is because conventional dual-mode universities have been working across a range of methods for years; also, campus-based universities have recently been increasingly taking the initiatives in distance teaching which gradually make them become dual-mode universities. According to Rumble, in order to survive the distance teaching university needs to remedy its two weaknesses: (1) economic vulnerability (e.g., the enormous time and effort needed to produce a course and the lack of a full range of subjects provided); and (2) the strategic vulnerability (e.g., the strategic preference of transforming into dual-mode university). Rumble thus questioned whether there is a future for the distance teaching university in a competitive environment. His concluding remarks were that the distance teaching university needs transform itself into the dual-mode university (see below).

‘While there are a number of strategies which DTUs [i.e., distance teaching universities] can adopt, nearly all of them can also be copied by a CBU [i.e., campus-based university] once it has adopted distance teaching. Thus the most effective response for a DTU may well be to turn itself into a DMU [i.e., dual-mode university], either by establishing an on-campus programme, or by merging with a CBU.’ (Rumble, 1992, p.43)

Rumble’s analysis opened a debate. On the one hand, positive feedback emerged. Campion (1996b, p.45) for example claimed that the small-scale dual-mode institutions might be the institutions of the future. On the other hand, further discussions and queries were raised. White (1992) for example responded to Rumble by highlighting one of Rumble’s points, i.e., the distance teaching university can still be successful as long as the quality of its course materials is maintained and improved. Mugridge (1992) in an attempt to clarify the debate first re-addressed Rumble’s (1989) concept of continuum -- the blurred boundary between what has hitherto been regarded as separate and non-separate makes the distance teaching university becomes vulnerable with regard to

competition. He next suggested that both quality and flexibility could give the distance teaching university decisive advantages since the conventional university is unable to breakthrough the rigidity of the traditional system. However, collaboration rather than competition between the distance teaching university and the conventional university is needed in order to make most institutions concentrate on what they can do better. Keegan (1994a) challenged Rumble's thought by arguing that the distance teaching university cannot be replaced. His statement was supported by evidence from the existence of large distance teaching universities throughout the world. To explain further, Keegan favoured the establishment of a distance teaching university if more than 22,000 students (Keegan and Rumble, 1982b, p.246) could be recruited in a year and a dual-mode university was opted for if less than 9,000 students were enrolled in a year. Nevertheless, Keegan also advocated the need for co-operation between different types of universities.

To sum up, section 2.2.2 draws a general picture of the distance teaching university by identifying its features, advantages, disadvantages and threats. The distance teaching university is favoured by a number of countries due to its strengths. However, it is facing challenges from other types of practice. Scholars thus suggest that the distance teaching university should improve both the quality of courses and the flexibility of constructing courses in order to keep surviving.

Overall, section 2.2 provides the general background of the distance teaching university (commonly called 'open university'). It started from the broader background, i.e., the practice in the field of distance education. It afterwards focused on the distance teaching university. As a whole, the following two points need to be highlighted. (1) Practices of distance education are very diverse. (2) The distance teaching university represents a special form of distance education.

This study is a case study of a distance teaching university (i.e., the UKOU) with the focus on course development by course teams. To provide further background information to the study, the literature review in the next section narrows down to the system for course provision at a distance teaching university.

2.3 System for course provision at a distance teaching university

The distance teaching university commonly treats course provision as its major work. To centrally control the work of course provision, the distance teaching university usually sets up a system. This section focuses on the system for course provision at a distance teaching university. Before moving into the details, there is a need to clarify the components of the system. Next, in order to deepen the understanding of the system, the debate on industrialisation of the system is further addressed. Hence, this section consists of the following two parts.

- System for course provision
- Industrialisation of the system

2.3.1 *System for course provision*

Before discussing the system for course provision, the term '*course*' is defined first. The term '*course*' is often linked with '*curriculum*'. In everyday life, these two words are used differently in British and American societies. Squires (1987, p.156) noticed that in the UK the word '*course*' is generally used to indicate both the total programme and the parts that make it up. Whereas in the USA the '*parts that make it up*' is commonly assigned to the word '*course*'. And the '*total programme*' is assigned to the word '*curriculum*'. In these days, British scholars have had American influence, and they tend to adopt the American usage, although traditional British terms are still widely used. Under the circumstances, current British scholars refer to the total programme as either the '*course*' or the '*curriculum*' and call the parts of the total programme '*course*'. It is thus suggested in this study that the concept of '*course*' has both narrow and broad meanings in the UK now (see below).

- The narrow meaning of 'course': the parts making up the programme
- The broad meaning of 'course': the total programme (in this sense, 'curriculum')

What a course team works on is a 'course' in narrow meaning. In distance education, the major components of a course are usually the actual course materials (e.g., the printed course materials, the TV programmes, etc.). However, Thorpe (1979, p.14) challenged the existing assumption arguing that a course is not a set of products but a process which 'happens' through the interaction of students, tutors and course team and is based on the course materials. In other words, the meaning of 'course' for Thorpe is not equal to the course materials; rather, it includes the interaction between the student, the course material and the tutor. This view broadens the general focus of course development. Following the development of new media, more and more courses include an on-line element, resulting an increased importance of computer-based teaching and learning between tutors and students for courses. The above understanding of courses would be useful for the present research.

Regarding *the system for course provision* at a distance teaching university, it functions as the controller of courses. Chesterton (1985) criticised this phenomenon on the ground that the curriculum control in distance education shifts the focus away from the student towards both the institution and its staff. This warning implies the importance of the system. But, what are the components of the system for course provision?

Kaye (1981, p.20) suggested that the system for course provision should be organised for creating, producing and distributing learning materials. According to him, the system for course provision is set up for conducting the work of *course creation*, *course production* and *distribution*. He defined these three components of the system as below.

- (1) *Course creation* is the process which converts academic ideas and teaching strategies into a prototype course using appropriate media for the achievement of curriculum objectives;
- (2) *Course production* is the process which turns the prototype course into a finished product, either in the form of a single copy (e.g., a master tape) or in the form of multiple copies (e.g., books or cassettes);
- (3) *Distribution* is the process which takes the product from its point of

production to the point at which it is available to a student. This includes, for example, distribution of correspondence texts to the student's home or a local centre where the student can collect them; transmission of broadcasts on open channels; or the location of a tutor where the student can contact him.' (Kaye, 1981, p.20)

The above shows that Kaye identified 'course creation' as the work of giving birth, planning and preparing various course materials by making them into a prototype.

According to him, 'course production' refers to the physical work of producing the final product based on the prototype. 'Course distribution' is defined as the process of passing course materials to users.

With respect to 'course production' and 'distribution', Dodd (1981b) expressed the following three concerns. (a) For printed materials, they need to be considered on how many items, how many years' usage, how many copies, what coding system, how many languages, what design standard, which printing process, location of printing and the total print output. (b) For broadcasting, considerations should lie in access, timing, frequency, regularity, life, assessment, print support and management. And (c) for those non-print and non-broadcast materials, the following should be watched: materials' availability, distribution, usage and assessment.

Kaye and Rumble (1981b, p.71) after comparing distance teaching universities and conventional universities claimed that the work of 'course creation' is familiar to academics both at distance teaching universities and conventional universities. But, academics at conventional universities have less experience in engaging in the activities of 'course production' and 'distribution'.

To date, some distance teaching institutions do not physically produce their course materials -- they use course materials produced by other organisations. Regardless of whether the distance teaching universities carry out the physical course production or not, they do need to be aware of the issues related to 'course creation', 'course production' and 'distribution'.

Terminology needs to be considered here. It is noticed that the notion of ‘course creation’ has no big difference from the notion of ‘course development’. An example is how Perry (1976, p.76) described the ‘course creation’: ‘to determine its objectives, its content, the method of its presentation’. Second, the meaning of the term ‘course development’ can be easily linked to the well-known term ‘curriculum development’. And third, others, e.g., Holmberg (1981, 1995), Jenkins (1985) and Rowntree (1981), used the term ‘course development’. Thus, in order to get the meaning quickly, the term ‘*course development*’ instead of ‘course creation’ is used in the rest of this thesis. With respect to the notion of ‘course production’, Lewis (1971a, 1971b, 1971c, 1972) used the term ‘course production’ to, differently from Kaye’s concept, describe the whole work of course planning, writing, editing and printing. After comparing with the current practice of the UKOU, this study mainly adopts Kaye’s notion of ‘course production’, rather than Lewis’s concept of ‘course production’.

This study suggests that the term of ‘course provision’ consists of both ‘course construction’ and ‘course distribution’ and that the term of ‘course construction’ comprises ‘course approval’, ‘course development’ and ‘course production’. The notion of course provision is illustrated in table 2-2.

[Table 2- 2] Notion of Course Provision

Course Provision			
Course Construction			Course distribution
Course approval	Course development	Course production	
Applying to various authorities for the approval for course provision by presenting the initial course planning	Designing the course in details and producing the prototype of various course materials	Manufacturing course materials based on the prototype produced	Distributing course materials from the places of production to learners and tutors

The ‘*system for course provision*’ refers to the system for the whole work of course approval, course development, course production and course distribution. By not mentioning course distribution, the ‘*system for course construction*’ refers to the system for the work of course approval, course development and course production.

The establishment of the system implies that courses under the operation of the system are pre-produced (Holmberg, 1981). This feature can be paralleled with what happens in industry. For instance, Rumble (1995a, p.15) described that education is as a service which is subject to industrialisation as manufacturing and other service industries. Industrialisation has become an issue in the field of distance education. To deepen the understanding of the system, the literature about the issue is reviewed below.

2.3.2 Debating on the extent of industrialisation of the system

The extent of industrialisation of the system for course provision at distance teaching institutions has triggered an important debate. For instance, Otto Peters (1983, 1998) claimed that distance education is the most industrialised form of learning and teaching and that this phenomenon can be detected easily from the system for course provision. Greville Rumble (1995a) challenged Peters's view. The debate has later on extended to the use of the notions of Fordism, neo-Fordism and post-Fordism. The literature review here is divided into the following two parts.

- Distance education and industrialisation
- Debate on Fordism, neo-Fordism and post-Fordism

Distance education and industrialisation

Otto Peters (1983, p.96) adopted the theories of industrial production to identify the features of distance education. His view summarised by Keegan (1996, pp.80-82) is as follows: distance education has the characteristics of *rationalisation, division of labour, mechanisation, assembly line, mass production, planning and preparation, standardization, functional change and objectification, and monopolisation*. Distance education, according to Peters, is the most industrialised form of teaching and learning.

How does Peters generate his thesis? He (Peters, 1994) firstly reviewed the documents on distance education in 30 different countries. He secondly reflected on his two unsatisfied investigations, i.e., the studies of relating distance education to other forms of imparting

knowledge and of applying a model of didactical analysis for conventional education to distance education. After investigating the socio-cultural and intellectual preconditions of distance education and interpreting distance education from historical, sociological and anthropological perspectives, he drew the above conclusions (Peters, 1996).

Keegan (1994b, pp.247-249) based on his understanding of the quality of the study commented that Peters's view can be treated as a rationale of distance education. Indeed, Peters's theory has been widely cited by other scholars. However, a number of criticisms on Peters's study emerged. For instance, Bååth (1981) criticised Peters's considerations as not being comprehensive. He pointed out that there are some practices of distance education that cannot apply the notion of industrialised distance education, e.g., the small-scale distance education, the distance education without pre-produced teaching materials and the distance education with simple printed study guides provided. Garrison and Shale (1987) argued that the characterisation of distance education proposed by Peters is not based on fundamental principles but methods, i.e., the form of its theoretical underpinning. Ehmann (referred to by Keegan, 1994b, p.249) on the other hand pointed out that Peters's claim was based on the phenomena and faiths in the 1960s which were changed drastically later on. Regarding this, Peters (1993, p.57) himself in fact already noticed the approach of the post-industrial society. He admitted that the traditional industrial model of distance teaching would not be suitable for a post-industrial society. New models of distance education would thus be needed.

With respect to Peters's central focus 'industrialisation', Lawrence and Young (1979, p.8) took it to identify the underlying pattern of the UKOU. They afterwards suggested the term of 'technological metaphor'. Peters (1989) contended that he did not advocate the industrialisation of teaching and learning and he did not object to other forms of teaching and learning. However, the over-emphasis on industrialisation by other scholars who produced their arguments based on Peters's thesis made Evans and Nation (1989b) raise the criticism of '*instructional industrialism*' -- the student and teacher becomes the 'object', the passive receiver of advice and knowledge. They (Evans and Nation, 1992) furthermore urged for the awareness of the broad range of theories available in

educational theory and social theory. For instance, they suggested the use of Giddens's social theory (i.e., time and space are inseparably involved in the social structuring processes of all institutions) which can be used as a base of theorising open and distance education.

Rumble (1995a, p.15) on the other hand challenged Peters's thesis by arguing that industrialisation is not the nature of distance education. It is because conventional education is also influenced by industrialisation and some distance teaching systems are not industrialised. They do not have the technological infrastructure for large volume printing and telecommunication, etc. Peters (1996) however refuted Rumble's criticism by arguing that Rumble was wrong to connect only the concept of industrialisation with product process. Rather, industrialisation is rooted in the modern western society in many ways -- economically, socially, culturally and politically. This means that not only the production process but also the structural differences are caused by industrialisation. In other words, Peters's view was that industrialisation is a much broader, more general and very comprehensive process. Taking Habermas's classification, Peters believed that distance education *as a sub-system of action determined by rational means-end-thinking* is predominantly determined by *technical rules*, whereas conventional instruction as a *sub-system of communicative action* is predominantly determined by *social norms*. With the above distinction, Peters, responding to Rumble, stressed that distance education has structural differences from conventional face-to-face teaching situations, i.e., not only in working processes but also in actual teaching and learning itself. According to Peters, distance education is a unique form of teaching and learning. To respond to this defence, Rumble (1996) pointed out that traditional face-to-face teaching also does use technology. It does apply batch processing to education in class-based teaching. It does plan, develop, implement and evaluate student's learning as to what happens in distance education. However, he agreed with Peters that there are forms of distance education that are highly industrialised. Peters (1998) insisted on his argument and further stressed that the work processes -- printing, dispatch, etc. -- at the periphery of learning and teaching at traditional universities *can* be industrialised to a great extent; but these processes *must* be industrialised for distance teaching universities. Rather than focusing on the work

processes, like Rumble, he preferred to stress the process of interaction between teachers and students. In his view, the oral teaching at traditional universities is classified as pre-industrial; and distance education is regarded as the most industrialised form of learning and teaching.

To sum up, the implication of the debate is that the understanding of the relationship between distance education and industrialisation, especially the extent of industrialised distance teaching, is important. Although some scholars dislike the fact that industrialisation transforms teaching and learning into certain forms, numerous practices of distance education do possess, to different degrees and in different aspects, the feature of industrialisation based on their practical needs.

Peters's notion of industrialisation has been revisited in the recent years and discussed from the notions of Fordism, neo-Fordism and post-Fordism.

Debate on Fordism, neo-Fordism and post-Fordism

Fordism is a term, which is derived from the production system pioneered by Henry Ford in the automotive industry. It was decided in 1909 that the Ford car company should only produced one model, i.e., Model T, though several styles were built around an identical chassis and mechanicals (Rumble, 1995b, p.14). With the further link between mass production and a capacity to provide a number of vehicle marques that offer consumer choice, the Ford Car Company soon became a model of success. Because the car industry is in many ways the paradigm industry of modern times, the investigation into the features of Ford's production is carried out. Ford's production principles were soon widely adopted by various practices in different areas. 'Fordism' thus emerged. Murray (1989, pp.38-39) argued that Fordism involves the following principles: (1) product standardisation, (2) mass production, (3) scientific management and (4) production flowline. Rumble (1995b) reminded us that many so-called features of Fordism (e.g., scientific management) in fact appear earlier than Ford's decision to produce only one model. An example he gave is the scientific management that was advocated in 1898-

1901 by Frederick W. Taylor. Nevertheless, he agrees that Fordism can be used to describe a labour process, which combines the scientific management of labour process and the moving assembly line.

Although Fordism dominated from the 1920s in the USA and the 1950s in the UK, it has already been in crisis in previous two decades. Roobeek (1987, pp.137-140) pointed out that Fordism is facing inherent control problems, e.g., bureaucratisation, which undermines its domination. His analysis implies that Fordism has both economic and technical limitations. Political and social factors also play key roles in the problems. To solve the problems, the following two approaches are discussed: neo-Fordism and post-Fordism.

The features of neo-Fordist, post-Fordist and Fordist modes of production were analysed by Badham and Mathews (1989, pp.206-208) who proposed a model of production systems which comprises three dimensions, i.e., labour responsibility, process variability and product innovation. According to them, the Fordist, neo-Fordist and post-Fordist modes have the following features.

- *The Fordist mode* has the characteristics of low level of product innovation, low level of process variability and low level of labour responsibility.
- *The neo-Fordist mode* features high level of product innovation, high level of process variability and low level of labour responsibility.
- *The post-Fordist mode* shows high level of product innovation, high level of process variability and high level of labour responsibility.

To compare further, the neo-Fordist mode 'extends Fordist system by providing much higher levels of flexibility and diversity' but 'retains a highly centralised Fordist approach to labour organisation and control' (Campion & Renner, 1992, pp.10-11). The post-Fordist mode, on the other hand, is free of the Fordist division of labour and promotes a skilled and responsible workforce. It is also pointed out that post-Fordism with its multiple versions of interpretation (Campion & Renner, 1992, p.17) is viewed as, for example, an economic development and a much wider and deeper social and cultural development (Hall & Jacques, 1989a, p.12). The relationship among these three

paradigms suggested by Renner (1995, p.287) is that Fordism, neo-Fordism and post-Fordism ‘may not be mutually exclusive, nor do they necessarily follow each other in predetermined evolutionary sequence’. He further argued that the Fordist, neo-Fordist and post-Fordist paradigms aiming at different kinds of markets are juxtaposed and parallel. According to him, an organisation might possess the features of Fordism, neo-Fordism and post-Fordism at the same time.

Campion and Renner (1992) investigated the application of these three approaches to distance education. The characteristics of Fordist, neo-Fordist and post-Fordist modes of production in distance education identified by them are organised by Rumble (1995c) into a table (see table 2-3).

[Table 2- 3] Fordist, Neo-Fordist and Post-Fordist Modes of Production in Distance Education

	Fordist Mode	Neo-Fordist Mode	Post-Fordist Mode
Level of Labour Responsibility – division of labour – level of de-skilling	low high high	low high high	high low low
Process Variability – vertical integration – mode – coverage	low centralised single mode (distance only) national	high central control + local administration possibly mixed mode international	high decentralised integrated distance and on-campus not stated
Product Innovation – product life – mass market / mass production	low long high	high short low	high short low

From: Rumble, G. (1995c, p.26)

Adopting the concept of Fordism, Raggatt (1993) described the UKOU as a Fordist institution -- its course production system has the characteristics of high volume, long runs and is bureaucratically managed. He argued that the inflexibility of UKOU’s system restricts the university in providing the quick response to the fast changing needs of society. Rumble (1995b, p.26) attacked Raggatt’s interpretation by pointing out that it is not appropriate to analyse a complex organisation like the UKOU by merely applying the Fordist framework -- a range of models (e.g., the neo-Fordist and the post-Fordist) are needed for better understanding the practices of distance education systems. Rumble’s thought was supported by Campion (1996b, p.44) who also contended that for

categorising the practice of the UKOU a yes/no response to the Fordist model is misleading.

Raggatt (1993) also argued that the post-Fordist approach is what the UKOU should adopt since the post-Fordist mode with its strengths of flexibility, democracy and being economic will allow the UKOU to compete successfully with other providers of open and distance education. Raggatt's suggestion made Campion (1996b) raise the following warning. He argued that post-Fordism should not be treated either as a panacea nor as a placebo since the debate on Fordism, neo-Fordism and post-Fordism does not appear to tell us what a good practice should be, although he (Campion, 1996b, p.45) also recommended the post-Fordist option. Alternatively, it was claimed (Campion, 1995, p.195; Campion and Renner, 1992, p.24) that as long as the practice is located within the current socio/political/economic context, neo-Fordism that is based on the Fordist system is likely to be the dominant mode.

Generally speaking, the debate on Fordism, neo-Fordism and post-Fordism helps us to have an in-depth understanding of the link between industrialisation and distance education. Those existing industrialised distance teaching institutions are needed to remedy the weaknesses of Fordism by, for example, taking strengths of neo-Fordist and post-Fordist modes although the Fordist mode does have a range of advantages. For the projects of open and distance education which are presently undergoing planning, both the extent of industrialisation and the selection of industrial paradigms are crucial to their future success.

To sum up, section 2.3 reviews the literature on the system for course provision at a distance teaching university. Firstly, the components of the system for course provision are described. Secondly, the debate on the extent of industrialisation of the system is presented. From the review, it is understood that the system for course provision at a distance teaching institution is set up for the work of course construction (including course approval, course development and course production) and course distribution. It is realised that the existence of the system has triggered various discussions on the extent of industrialisation. The debate continues by adopting the notions of Fordism, neo-Fordism

and post-Fordism. The review of the whole debate tells that the industrialised system for course provision has both strengths and weaknesses.

After overviewing the system for course provision in a distance teaching university, the next section narrows down the review towards course development.

2.4 Course development in distance education

The notions of 'course', 'course construction' and 'course development' were discussed in section 2.3.1. Course development is the major work within the whole process of course construction. Ranges of literature already give the guidance for developing a course. To provide the background information of the study, this section focuses on the following three concerns.

- Foundations of course design
- Guidelines on course development for distance education
- Practical curriculum/course development

Course design is an important part of course development in distance education. Without going into details of various methods for designing a course, this section outlines the foundations of course design. To tell how to develop courses for distance education, scholars draw a number of guidelines, which thus consists of the second part of the section. Not only the general guidelines, scholars also report the practice of curriculum/course development which is reviewed in the end of the section.

2.4.1 Foundations of course design

In this section, the review of the foundations of course design is rooted in the field of distance education. In order to build up the basic understanding of course design in distance education, the review is divided into the following three parts.

- Types of distance teaching
- Course design and educational technology
- Pedagogical concerns on distance teaching

Courses are designed differently for different types of teaching. Thus, there is a need to understand the types of distance teaching before moving into the scenario of course design. Since course design in distance education is linked with educational technology, the second focus of the section becomes course design and educational technology. For course teams, one important work is to provide pedagogy in course materials. To build up the background of this study, the pedagogical concerns on distance teaching are discussed in the end of the section.

Types of distance teaching

The practice of distance teaching varies among different institutions, and each institution may vary its teaching practice at different times. Daniel (1996, pp.49-60) identified the following two innovations in distance education between 1960 and 1990: (1) *the use of telecommunications to link remote classrooms* and (2) *the enrichment of correspondence education by the integration of other media, beginning with television*. The remote-classroom teaching is teacher-centred, which is mainly based on synchronous communication and interaction. By contrast, the correspondence tradition of distance education is student-centred, which provides asynchronous communication and interaction. Similarly, Bates (1995, pp.48-51) identified the following two instructional models that dominate distance education.

- The remote classroom
- The front-end systems design

The model of remote classroom refers to the situation in which a face-to-face teaching is directly transformed into a distance teaching context, for example, a televised lecture and an audio conference seminar. This kind of distance teaching merely replicates the conventional classroom teaching.

Front-end systems design is based on the systems approach which considers, step by step, the development of course outline, the selection of media, the production of course materials, course delivery and course evaluation. Sewart (1981) claimed that the teaching process should be viewed as the transmission of both subject matter and advice/support, not subject matter alone. For distance teaching, he suggested that the self-instructional package, normally used by distance teaching universities to provide teaching, must embrace the function of advice/support in addition to the provision of academic knowledge. His reflection provides valuable insight into course development conducted by course teams.

In current practice, the following teaching is one of the focal points.

- on-line teaching

In on-line teaching, teaching happens in the cyberspace. Computer networks, already spreading its tentacles into the modern society, affect teaching in a number of ways. The basic elements of online education include e-mail, threaded discussions (or called asynchronous conferencing, a forum, or a bulletin board), real-time conferencing (i.e., online synchronous interaction), groupware (e.g., Lotus Notes), file transfer (to permit the uploading and downloading of documents), application software (e.g., spreadsheets, SPSS) and simulation (Kearsley, 2000). The curriculum development of on-line course benefits from the creation of authoring tools (e.g., FrontPage) and Web-based course tools (e.g., FirstClass).

The course teams that the present study investigates do not design on-line teaching, or remote-classroom teaching. Thus, the rest of the section only focuses on systems design. Since systems design is a main concern in educational technology, the next section discusses course design and educational technology together.

Course design and educational technology

Before introducing the front-end systems design, the relationship between course design and educational technology (commonly called 'instructional design' in the USA) is dealt

with first. Course design is closely linked with educational technology. Educational technology helps course developers to design courses that suit educational needs.

Rowntree (1982, p.xvi) based on his understanding of this relationship even claimed that educational technology *IS* curriculum development.

What is *educational technology*? It is defined as 'the systematic application of scientific or other organised knowledge to the practical tasks of education' (Hawkrige, 1976, p.9). Educational technology was strongly influenced by *behaviourism* for several decades. In order to break away from the view that educational technology is the same as behaviourism, Hawkrige (1981) pointed out the importance of recognising the multi-disciplinary origins of educational technology. These days, the traditional behaviourist view of educational technology is under attack from many angles and disciplines -- from cognitive science, information technology and critical theory and radical critiques (Hawkrige, 1991). In the field of open and distance education, the behaviourist rationale in association with Fordist principles is also criticised as ideologically threatening to the quality of openness which should be less technocratic and more humanist (Stevens, 1996, p.248). Behaviourism is already not the only approach to both course design and educational technology.

Alternative directions of educational technology and course design have emerged. For instance, Hawkrige (1996) outlined 'the next educational technology' in higher education with the characteristics of globalisation, electronification, commodification, domination and liberation. Thorpe (1995) advocated the emphasis of learner's reflection on learning. Courses designed by adopting the notion of *constructivism* provide students the opportunities to explore various routes and create their own learning projects.

With the understanding of the development in both course design and educational technology, the hegemony of course design, i.e., the behaviourist front-end systems course design, is still investigated next because it deeply impacts on UKOU practice.

Teaching perceived by the systems course design (i.e., the systems approach of instruction) is structured by inter-dependent components which function coordinately to reach a specified set of goals. The systems course design is known from the '*objectives model*' that highlights the pre-set objectives. According to the classic study by Ralph W. Tyler (1949), the following four fundamental questions of curriculum development (course development) need to be asked. (1) What educational purposes should the school (the educational institutions) seek to attain? (2) What educational experiences can be provided that is likely to attain these purposes? (3) How can these educational experiences be effectively organized? And (4) how can we determine whether these purposes are being attained? His suggested answers are outlined in table 2-4.

In this model, the provision of educational objectives together with the selection, organisation and evaluation of learners' learning experiences consist of four main areas of curriculum development (course development). The objective of a course is the desired end; learners' learning experiences are the means for attaining that end; and the evaluation is for determining whether the means did indeed achieve the end. Apparently, this '*objectives model*' (or called the '*means-end model*') is a systematic and rational approach that prescribes what the course developers should do.

The behavioural objectives have a range of advantages, e.g., they encourage scholars to think and plan in detail; they provide a rational basis for the evaluation (Macdonald-Ross, 1973). However, the use of behavioural objectives is still criticised by scholars for various reasons, e.g., to define behavioural objectives before the event conflicts with voyages of exploration; lists of behaviours do not adequately represent the structure of knowledge (Macdonald-Ross, 1973).

After understanding the hegemony of course design (i.e., the systems design), the pedagogical concerns on distance teaching are discussed next.

[Table 2- 4] Tyler's Rationale behind Curriculum and Instruction

Fundamental Question	Main Concern	Suggested Answers
(1) What educational purposes should the school seek to attain?	Educational objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sources of educational objectives: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – studies of the learners – studies of contemporary life outside the school – suggestions from subject specialists • The screens which the suggested objectives should be passed: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – philosophy – psychology of learning • Proper forms of stating objectives: be important
(2) What educational experiences can be provided that is likely to attain these purposes?	Selection of learning experiences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The learning experience: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – the interaction between the learner and the external conditions in the environment • Characteristics of learning experiences useful in attaining objectives: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – be able to develop skill in thinking – be helpful in acquiring information – be helpful in developing social attitudes – be helpful in developing interests • Principles in selecting learning experiences: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – must give the student opportunity to deal with the kind of content implied by the objective – must let the student obtain satisfactions from carrying on the kind of behaviour implied by the objectives – must be appropriate to the student's present attainments, his predispositions, etc. – be aware that there are many particular experiences that can be used to attain the same educational objectives – be aware that the same learning experience will usually bring about several outcomes
(3) How can these educational experiences be effectively organized?	Organization of learning experiences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organization: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – the vertical relation among learning experiences – the horizontal relation among learning experiences • Criteria for effective organization: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – continuity – sequence – integration • Important aspects: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – organizing threads: types of elements which serve as the organizing elements for the curriculum – organizing principles: to wove threads – structural elements: to organize learning experiences – process of planning a unit of organization
(4) How can we determine whether these purposes are being attained?	Evaluation of learning experiences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluation: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – must appraise the behaviour of students – must involve more than a single appraisal at any one time in order to identify changes which may be occurring • Important aspects: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – the evaluation procedures – the way of using the results of evaluation – other values & uses of evaluation procedures: e.g., the influence on learning; the importance in the individual guidance of pupils; the usefulness as a basis for identifying particular points needing further attention with particular groups of students; the important way of providing information about the success of the school to the school's clientele

Based on: Tyler, R. W. (1949)

Pedagogical concerns on distance teaching

There are a number of pedagogical arrangements that help distance teaching. For instance, Rowntree (1994, pp.14-15), based on the ground that the open learning material should comprise both 'information' and 'action', suggested the following three types.

- *Tell-and-test*: An unbroken reading (or viewing or listening) is provided (lasting for about several pages or minutes) which is followed by asking the learner to do a self-test and to check the pre-produced answer.
- *Tutorial-in-print*: The material, like the tutor, asks the learner questions and gives the immediate feedback from time to time with the purpose of creating a kind of 'dialogue' between the academic and the learner.
- *Reflective action guide*: The material is not only organised like a guide to action elsewhere (e.g., in real situations, and with other people) but also requires the learner to think critically about why and how they are doing things. This is produced with the assumptions that the important learning will happen away from the material. The purpose of it is to help the learner either to develop their individual insights or to build up some kind of practical competence.

The above three types of pedagogical arrangements are useful. Since pedagogical arrangements can be varied, an understanding of fundamental pedagogical concerns on distance teaching is needed. For this, firstly the theoretical underpinnings of distance teaching are addressed. Secondly, the relationship between distance teaching and technology is analysed.

Theoretical underpinnings of distance teaching

Keegan (1983) searching for a theory of distance education introduced six distance education theorists and their ideas. They are Charles A. Wedemeyer from the USA (a theory of independent study), Michael G. Moore from both the UK and the USA (a theory of apartness and autonomy, which is later on termed as transactional distance), Otto Peters from Germany (theory of industrialisation), Börje Holmberg from both

Sweden and Germany (guided didactic conversation), John A. Bååth from Sweden (two-way communication in correspondence education) and David Sewart from the UK (a continuity of concern for students learning at a distance). In this chapter, Peters's thesis has already been reviewed (see section 2.3.3). Among the other theorists mentioned, both Wedemeyer and Bååth have comparatively less influence on the current practice of open and distance education in the UK, and Sewart's contribution does not directly rest on course development. Both Moore's and Holmberg's thoughts are closer to the research problem of this study, therefore, their theories are reviewed here.

Michael Moore (1993) suggested the use of '*transactional distance*' to define distance education. According to him (Moore, 1993, p.22), the separation of the teacher from the learner is the key that leads to the emergence of distance education. Because of the separation, there is a need to cross a psychological and communications space that might create misunderstanding. This psychological and communications space is the reason why the 'transactional' is highlighted by Moore -- the concept of transaction 'connotes the interplay among the environment, the individuals and the patterns of behaviors in a situation' (explained by Boyd and Apps, quoted by Moore, 1993, p.22). Although the separation of teacher and learner exists in any educational programme even in face-to-face education, it is sufficiently significant in distance education; and the special teaching-learning strategies and techniques can be identified as distinguishing features of this family of educational practice. An attempt to reduce the transactional distance is thus particularly needed for a distance-study course.

Moore (1993, p.23) suggested the following three sets of variables that decide the extent of transactional distance in an educational programme.

- *Learner autonomy*
- *Dialogue* (a kind of positive interaction, the extent to which learner and teacher are able to respond to each other in any educational programme)
- *Structure* (the rigidity of an educational programme, a measurement of an educational programme's responsiveness to learners' individual needs)

Moore furthermore proposed a typology of independent educational programmes (from the most independent to the least independent) based on his suggested three variables. In the typology, the most independent educational programme (which has highest distance) has no structure and no dialogue; in this, high learner autonomy is provided in the goal setting, implementation or evaluation. The least independent educational programme (which has lowest distance) has no structure but has dialogue; in it, no learner autonomy is provided -- all the goal setting, implementation, and evaluation are teacher-determined.

From Moore's own report (1983, p.75), it can be seen that his thesis emerges from literature review. In other words, the theory is not grounded on empirical data. He however described a major follow-up empirical research project generated from his theory, which can make contribution to the validity of his theory (Moore, 1983, pp.90-92).

Keegan (1996, pp.69-75) evaluating Moore's work recommended that Moore has well established the concept of distance by addressing the variables of dialogue and structure. But in his view, Moore's concept of autonomy is more tentative. Nevertheless, Moore's theory really tackles the issue of distance. Also he highlights the importance of a learner's character in teaching-learning process. This triggers other investigations. For instance, Saba and Shearer (1994) verified Moore's key theoretical concepts with a dynamic model of distance education by researching on a tele-lesson. Their conclusion is that the increment of learner control boosts dialogue with the reduction of transactional distance and that the growth of instructor control produces more structure and transactional distance. Garrison and Baynton (1987) also used Moore's theory; but they moved the focus to explore the idea of the learner controlling the learning process. Their suggestion is that the concept of control -- comprising the elements of independence, power, and support -- is a more inclusive concept for understanding distance education.

The second theoretical consideration on distance teaching which is going to be introduced is *Börje Holmberg's* (1983, p.115) *guided didactic conversation*. Holmberg claimed that good distance education is like a guided didactic conversation that aims at learning. From his viewpoint, the guided didactic conversation is a pervasive

characteristic of distance education (Holmberg, 1995, p.47). Both the course and the non-contiguous communication (i.e., mediated communication) in distance education are seen as the instruments of the conversation-like interaction between learners and teachers.

This view, re-organized by Keegan (1996, p.95), is that constant interaction ('conversation') exists in distance education through the following two kinds of conversation.

- *Real conversation*: by correspondence, telephone or personal contact
- *Simulated conversation*: i.e., internalised conversation by study of a text or conversational style of course author(s)

The following six characteristics of guided didactic conversation are highlighted by Holmberg (1983, p.117). (1) The presentation of study matter is easily accessible with easily readable writings and moderate density of information. (2) Explicit advice and suggestions are provided to learners. (3) All the exchange of views, the raising of questions, and the making of judgements are invited. (4) There is an attempt to involve learners emotionally by arousing their personal interests. (5) The personal style is used, e.g., adopting the personal and possessive pronouns. (6) The demarcation of changes of themes is suggested which can be done through either explicit statements, typographical means, a change of speakers or pauses. Holmberg believed that course presentations would not only be attractive but also support and facilitate learners' learning if distance-study courses follow the above principles.

Holmberg (1995, pp.47-50; 1983, pp.115-121) himself stated that his theory is originally based on general postulates. In other words, it is not generated from collected data but from his hypotheses. He also acknowledged that there is no conclusive evidence for the validity of the theory among three follow-up empirical studies -- no consistent, statistically significant corroboration is obtained in these three investigations, although it is apparent that the tendency of these three studies is to favour the theory. His honest remark reveals that this theory needs more back up from empirical data. Nevertheless, Holmberg's theory has been constantly cited. His concern on giving guidance to learners

for building both real and simulated conversation between the learner and the teacher is valuable.

By putting Moore and Holmberg's theories together, the crucial themes of pedagogical arrangement in distance teaching emerge. They are the notion of 'interaction' (from Moore's 'dialogue' and Holmberg's 'conversation'), the notion of 'independence' (from Moore's 'learner autonomy'), the notion of 'distance' (from Moore's 'transactional distance') and the notion of 'openness' (from Moore's 'structure'). Here, the relationship of these four notions is profiled.

Regarding the relationship between '*interaction*' and '*independence*', Daniel and Marquis (1979) put these two notions together as a pair and urged the need for getting the right mixture. Daniel (1983) witnessing the development of technologies further proposed that the extent of both independence and interaction in distance education could be raised in new media. Gaskell and Mills (1989) reviewing the relevant writings summarised that the interaction-independence relationship has a close link with the openness-distance relationship.

How do the scholars analyse the concepts of 'interaction' and 'independence' in terms of their degree of variations? Moore (1983, pp.87-89) suggested an eight-level scale for investigating the degree of learner autonomy (i.e., independence) -- the criteria for this are objective setting, implementation, and evaluation. This brings out a continuum of independence. Regarding the notion of dialogue (i.e., interaction), although two codes (i.e., -D as no dialogue, +D as dialogue) are suggested by him, elsewhere he (Moore, 1983, p.76) compared 11 teaching methods in terms of the degree of distance with the concepts of dialogue and individualisation. In this comparison, different teaching methods show different degrees of dialogue and individualisation. In Moore's mind the concept of interaction does have more than two variations. Thus, the continuum of interaction might be possible to be suggested. Based on the notion of continuum, there are, without doubt, considerable variations.

If the distance between teacher and learner is inevitable and the learner cannot avoid having a certain degree of independence, course developers need to try to make a course more open (open access, open pedagogy), less distant (learners feel close to both teachers and other learners), highly interactive (two-way, synchronous, in group communication) and highly independent (learners control their own learning).

For this, media can provide tremendous help. The following thus discusses the relationship between distance teaching and technology.

Distance teaching and technology

From Keegan's (1996) definition and the debates on industrialisation and on Fordism, it can be seen that technology and distance education have a close link. Scholars divide the development of open and distance education into generations. For instance, Bates (1991), Garrison (1985) and Nipper (1989) discussed the third generation of distance education. Lauzon and Moore (1989) suggested the emergence of the fourth generation of distance education. All these literature considers the generations of distance education in the light of the development of technology.

It is apparent that with the arrival of an information society, those who are engaged in distance education tend to consider seriously the influence of new tele-communication technology on distance education. Hawkrigde (1995) heralded that a 'Big Bang' (which has been used to describe the sudden switch from paper to computers in the London Stock Exchange) is likely to happen in distance education on a global basis. Noticing the trends, Daniel (1996, pp.50-55) thus firstly identified the following four broad groups of technologies which have influenced the development of distance education: (1) *the combination of printing and the post in correspondence tuition*, (2) *the mass media of broadcasting*, (3) *personal media* and (4) *the telecommunication systems*. Secondly, following Eisenstadt (1995), he (Daniel, 1996, p.55) highlighted (5) *the knowledge media* which as the new technological combinations -- the convergence of computing, telecommunications and the cognitive sciences -- have the potential to be useful in distance education.

It should be noted that scholars recently move the discussion on distance teaching towards the provision of both *resource-based courses* and *computer conferencing courses*. For example, Mason (1995) reported that resource-based learning is provided in a course of the UKOU with an attempt to reduce the amount of tailor-made print-based material. Based on this concern, the time for producing printed materials might be decreased although the time for producing other course materials, e.g., CD-ROM, might increase. Farnes (1993a) evaluating an on-line course concluded that the course does enhance students' skills in collaborative learning and the use of databases. Also it does provide a wider use of telematics for course development and delivery. Rowntree (1995), on the other hand, reflected his experience of tutoring on an on-line course. According to him, a tutor in the course needs to play multiple roles and spends a considerable amount of time on tutoring and communicating with the student via a computer in order to keep 'many-to-many' communication going. Moreover, Daniel (1996, pp.111-116) suggested that both computer conferencing and electronic mail could provide quicker feedback and shorter turnaround time on assignments compared with using conventional mail.

The above development leads scholars to re-think the issue of time and space. For instance, Jarvis (1996, p.48) suggested that different new technologies stimulate the re-examination of the relationship between space and time in distance education. Marsden (1996) also challenged the existing studies on distance education, which only focus on physical separation between teachers and learners. He further argued that both 'remote in space' and 'remote in time' are the definitions of distance. According to him, learners not only experience a physical distance with teachers but also are temporally discrete from both course team members and each other because learners engage in learning at different times that might be in different time zones. Therefore, taking Einstein's thesis that space-time is one object in which space and time are interrelated dimensions, he suggested that in distance education learners are spatio-temporally remote from both teachers and each other within spatial and temporal matrices. The existence of distance does not matter to learners if the text teaches them. He thus claimed that the discussions on 'distance' should not rest on the distance between teachers and learners, but between

the content of courses and the experiences of actual learners who are remote in space and time. In this way, read by Marsden, 'distance' is as 'relevance'.

To sum up, section 2.4.1 reviews the foundations of course design, which cover the issues of, first, the types of distance teaching, second, course design and educational technology, and third, pedagogical concerns on distance teaching. Regarding the types of distance teaching, the practice of distance teaching can be viewed as the adoption of remote classroom model, the use of front-end systems design or a kind of online teaching. The data collected in the present research only focuses on front-end systems design. With respect to course design and educational technology, their relationship and their evolving developments are noted. However, only the systems course design as the hegemony of course design is further introduced. As to the pedagogical concerns on distance teaching, both the theoretical considerations on distance teaching and the relationship between distance teaching and technology are tackled. It is now understood that the course developer needs to consider interaction, independence, distance and openness; and the use of technology (e.g., print, computer-based media) is vital for providing distance teaching.

The rest of the section 2.4 focuses on course development, which is divided into two: the guidelines on course development in distance education; and the practical curriculum/course development.

2.4.2 Guidelines on course development in distance education

Section 2.4.1 has introduced the classic model of systems course design (Tyler, 1949).

The system often implies the whole process of course construction (including course development). Thus, in this section, the process of course construction is discussed first.

From the discussion, the rational course development is presented.

Most existing guides and manuals for course construction are derived from a classic study by Brian N. Lewis (1971a, 1971b, 1971c, 1972) in which he proposed a detailed

activity network for the course construction at the UKOU. In his activity network (see table 2-5), all the activities are linked together in a sequence and they are then divided into three phases. In the network, the first two phases regard course development.

[Table 2- 5] Lewis’s Activity Network for Course Construction

Lewis’s Activity Network for Course Construction	
Phase 1	Planning
	1A: course planning
	1B: unit planning
Phase 2	Writing
	2A: unit writing
	2B: developmental testing
	2C: external assessment
Phase 3	Editing and printing

From: Lewis, B. N. (1971b, p.116)

The first phase of the network starts from the activities of ‘collate and analyse information about courses needed’, ‘review staff talent and inclinations’, ‘review budgetary constraints’, ‘review books available’ and ‘collate and analyse information about learner characteristics’. The second phase ends in the activities of ‘send D4 (i.e., the draft 4 of course unit) to editors’, ‘send graphics (completed) to editors’, ‘produce radio programme’ and ‘produce TV programme’. Various people and working units are involved in the activities in these two phases of the network. They are: the course unit author, the chairperson of the course team, the dean of the faculty, Institute of Educational Technology, the sub-committee, the working group, the publishing officer, the student consultant, the BBC, the media evaluator and the external assessor.

The activity network suggested by Lewis has its strengths. Kaye (1991, p.8) identified the following three advantages of the network. (1) It presents an optional sequencing of activities. (2) It includes all the activities. (3) It facilitates the co-ordination of activities between different team members and/or working groups with different responsibilities.

The activity network of Lewis can be applied to the UKOU. For instance, according to Kaye’s (1973) examination, the flow of course production in the Science Faculty of the UKOU is similar to Lewis’s chart. Kaye (1991, p.8) later found out that the procedures in

the faculty after nearly two decades are still relatively the same as that suggested by Lewis. However, not all the courses of the UKOU follow the activity network of Lewis. As Lewis (1971b, p.117) himself pointed out ‘the prescriptive element being based partly on accumulated insights ... and partly on the design philosophy of the educational technologist (i.e., the instructional designer).’ In other words, the network includes all the possible situations that do not always happen in reality. Lewis (1971c, p.195) thus claimed that his activity network ‘is optimally effective if and only if some fairly stringent conditions are satisfied.’ This implies that in terms of course development there is, based on the reason of complexity, a distance between the plan and the reality.

Roger Lewis and John Meed (1986) elsewhere provided a guide to manage the production process for constructing course materials in open and distance education. They selected UKOU’s health education programme as an example to explain the phases of course construction and the major activities involved. It is presented in table 2-6.

[Table 2- 6] Phases of Course Construction: An Example

Phases of Course Construction: An example (from: UKOU’s Health Education Programme)	
1. Introductory phase	(1) Set up the course team. (2) Agree overall production timetables. (3) Decide how to use consultants. (4) Develop initial ideas on course content and structure.
2. Materials development phase	(5) Decide on major themes and topics to be covered. (6) Specify learning objectives for each topic. (7) Develop ideas for student activities needed to help students achieve objectives. (8) Decide on the media to be used. (9) Commission and write the first drafts. (10) Review the possible formats and the types of layout or presentation. (11) Transform the first drafts into the second drafts including activities, illustrations, headings, etc., in the final layout form. (12) Test the draft materials.
3. Final production phase	(13) Review comments, modify materials for the third and final drafts. (14) Finalise design input. (15) Carry out final editing and mark-up of the copy for printing.

From: Lewis, R. & Meed, J. (1986, p.11)

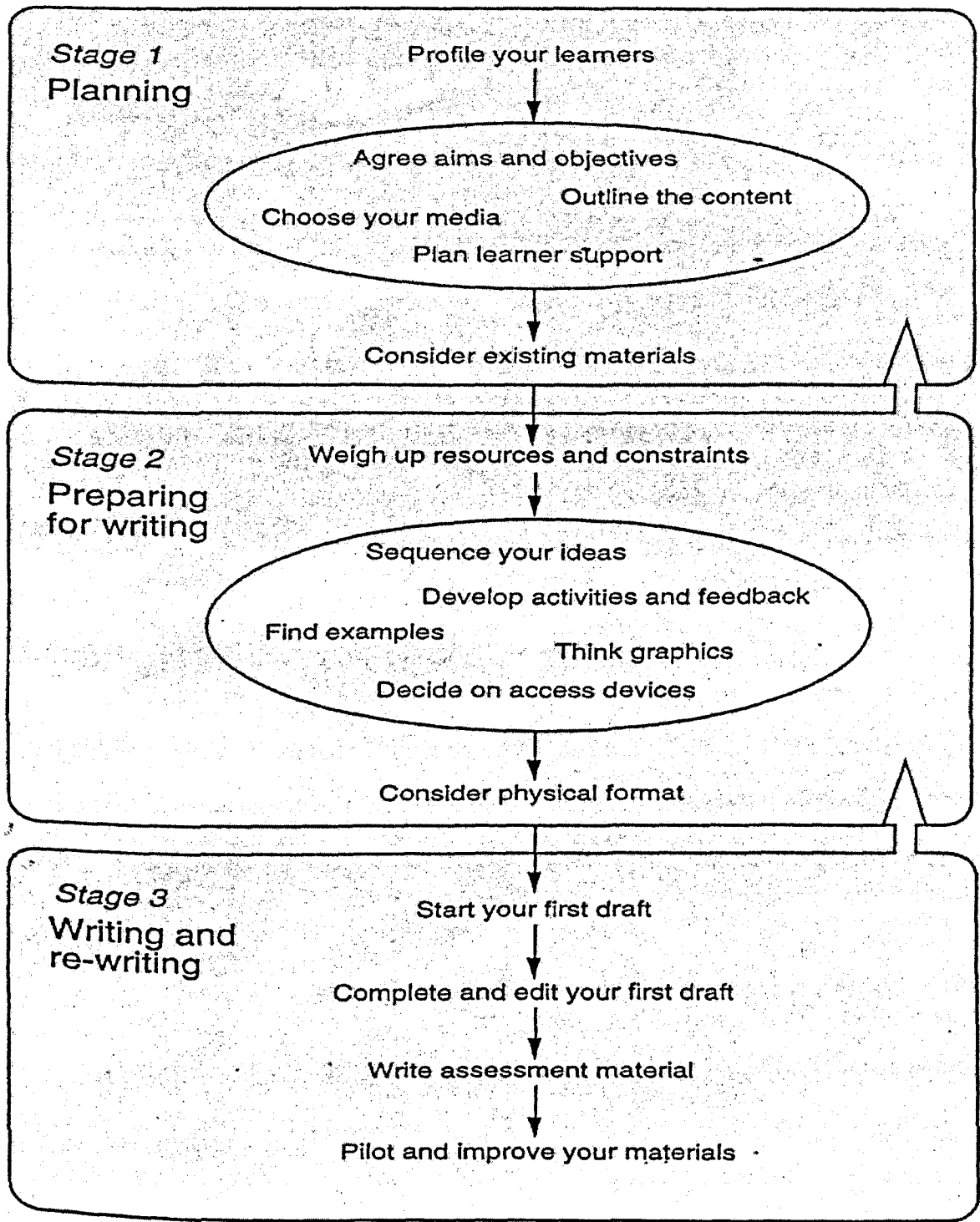
In addition to giving examples, Lewis and Meed (1986, pp.9, 13-15) also highlighted the following eight major activities and provided a checklist for considering them.

- (1) *Course planning*: drawing up the outline of the course; structuring the course into chunks; selecting media; deciding format; other.
- (2) *Financial budgeting*: drawing up budget; managing the budget; other.
- (3) *Scheduling activities against time*: drawing up a schedule; maintaining the schedule; other.
- (4) *Authoring*: selecting authors; commissioning authors; training authors; contracting authors; other.
- (5) *Drafting and testing*: editing drafts; getting comments on drafts; managing re-drafting; carrying out testing; other.
- (6) *Preparing manuscript for production*: making the final check; clearing the copyright; drawing up the final specification; deciding the layout; arranging the design; commissioning the illustrations; deciding the production method; drawing up the final schedule; other.
- (7) *Production*: managing copy-editing; managing design, illustrations, type-settings and paste-up; managing proof-reading; managing printing (or its equivalent in other media); arranging re-production / replication; other.
- (8) *Maintaining the materials*: checking performance of the materials; issuing errata / update; collecting data for revising the materials; other.

The above activities emphasized by Roger Lewis and John Meed (1986) overlap with those addressed by Brian N. Lewis (1971a, 1971b, 1971c, 1972). This similarity tells that the process of course production is likely to comprise such activities. Since there are a number of activities involved, it takes time to produce course materials. Practitioners thus search for the ways to reduce the time.

Course development in this sense almost equates with the preparation for course materials. Richard Freeman and Roger Lewis (1995) suggested a *cyclical process* in the development phases. According to them, there are three main activities in the cycle. (1) An author drafts a piece of course material. (2) Others comment on the draft. (3) The author re-drafts the course material. This cycle continues till the course material is considered to be ready for production. The whole process is sometimes short. But, it might be a complex one with several drafts required.

Similarly, Derek Rowntree (1994) suggested a *route map* for materials preparation (see figure 2-1).



From: Rowntree, D. (1994, p.5)
[Figure 2- 1] Rowntree's Route Map for Materials Preparation

In summary, Rowntree's route map comprises the following three stages.

- *Planning*: i.e., profile your learners, agree aims and objectives, outline the content, choose your media, plan for learner support and consider existing materials.
- *Preparing for writing*: i.e., weigh up your resources and constraints, sequence your ideas, develop activities and feedback, find examples, think graphics, decide on access devices and consider the physical format.
- *Writing and re-writing*: i.e., start your first draft, complete and edit your first draft, write assessment material and pilot and improve your materials.

This route map is useful for the preparation of course materials. It highlights a number of concerns before the real work starts. It suggests what the author should focus on during the process of developing course materials. It also tells that the whole process of course development is featured by continuous writing and re-writing. For finalising the manuscript, the work might need to start again from the stage of planning.

The 'Course Production Handbook' is UKOU's official guide to course provision. The handbook is modified from time to time based on the needs. To control the whole process of course provision, the 'course planning calendar' is provided by the UKOU. The handbook and UKOU's system for course provision will be introduced in Chapter 4 with more details.

To sum up, the review in section 2.4.2 focuses on guidelines on course development in distance education. For guiding the course developer to develop a course, scholars point out a number of major activities. They divide the whole work into phases. The cyclical route/map to develop course materials is also suggested. These prescriptive guidelines provide some ideal patterns to develop a course. However, the rational course development is not the same as the practical situation. The practical curriculum/course development is reviewed next.

2.4.3 Practical curriculum/course development

The practical curriculum/course development has already attracted the attention of a number of scholars. Basically, these investigations are derived from a classic study, i.e., Schwab's (1978) advocacy of focusing on '*the practical*' which is against *the theoretic*. According to Schwab (1978), *the theoretic* leads to a range of difficulties, e.g., being ill-fitted and inappropriate to problems of actual teaching and learning. Comparatively, *the practical* has the following four features (Schwab, 1978, pp.289-291).

- Its outcome is a decision, a selection and guide to possible action.
- Its subject matter is something taken as concrete and particular and treated as easily influenced by circumstance, and therefore highly subject to unexpected change.
- The origin of problems arises from the states of affairs in relation to us.
- Its method, neither deductive nor inductive, calls for deliberation that is a complex, fluid and transactional discipline.

In Schwab's view, the practical curriculum is, developed by the method of deliberation, the result of considering a wide possible variety of alternatives. It is not a generalisation, but the decisions about actions in concrete situations. It does not deal with abstractions from cases, but tackles the actual cases that cannot be settled by merely applying a principle.

Decker Walker (1971a, 1971b, 1990) following Schwab's advocacy, believed that curriculum problems are fundamentally practical rather than theoretical (Walker, 1990, p.160). Thus, instead of focusing on the prescription of what to do in curriculum development, he investigated the actual process of curriculum development. After he studied the strategies of deliberation in three curriculum development projects, '*the naturalistic model*' was derived (Walker, 1971a) that consists of the following three elements: platform, deliberation and design.

- *Platform*: This refers to 'values, beliefs, assumptions, and preconceptions that members hold in common, and that serve as the basis for their work' (Walker,

1971b, p.11). This implies that the curriculum developer does not start the curriculum development with a blank slate.

- *Deliberation*: This means 'the discussions by means of which project staffs apply their platform to the task of creating the curriculum design' (Walker, 1971b, p.11). To state further, deliberation comprises the formulation of decision points, the devising of alternative choices, the consideration of arguments for and against each choice, and the decision which defines some parts of the curriculum design (Walker, 1971b, p.198).
- *Design*: This is 'the set of relationships embodied in the materials in use' (Walker, 1971b, p.11). A curriculum's design can be specified by the series of decisions that produce it. This implies that the theoretically interesting output of the curriculum development process is, in this model, a set of design decisions, not a collection of objects, not a list of objectives, and not a set of learning experiences.

What are the relationships of the above three components?

'The platform is shown as the base on which further work rests. Platform principles, together with whatever data the project collects, are the raw material used in deliberation in the course in which curriculum materials are designed. The design stands at the apex of the structure to indicate both its status as the ultimate end of the process, and its dependence upon the other components' (Walker, 1971a, p.58).

It can be seen that Walker treated the platform as the beginning, the deliberation as the process, and the design as the end. Since curriculum problems are resolved by obtaining better curriculum decisions through deliberation, good deliberation is needed (Walker, 1990, pp.180-181). Walker (1971b, p.198) concluded that the process of curriculum development consists of two stages: (1) the creation of a platform of common beliefs and (2) deliberation upon the problems encountered in transforming that platform into a curriculum design. Primarily, this model is descriptive and temporal.

Holt (1996), like Walker, also took Schwab's view; but he compared course making to film making. Against the rational model of curriculum development, he treated curriculum process as a creative activity. Taking the example of producing a classic film,

he argued for the deliberative resolution of practical problems in making a curriculum.

He concluded that management is of great importance.

Holt's study coincides with both Northcott, (cited by Rumble, 1986, pp.168-169), and Borremans (1996, p.116) who saw course development as a project. A project with planned results is carried out with a specific amount of money and staffing within a given period of time; its product cannot be predicted until it is actually finished. This project-based nature of course development reveals that course development is not like the strict routine although the activities involved follow a plan.

The project-like feature makes Kaye (1991, p.7) enlarge the scope of tasks of course development and suggest the following three types of tasks of course development.

- Project co-ordination and decision-making tasks
- Research and information exchange tasks
- Authoring tasks

It can be seen that course development in Kaye's view does not merely mean to work on an academic task; the arrangement of human affairs is also included in the work of course development. This thinking advances the activity network of Lewis that only focuses on academic activities.

Gay (1985), in a similar vein, claimed that the nature of curriculum development possesses the interpersonal, political, social, collaborative and incremental features. In his suggestion, the notion of curriculum development consists of the following five elements.

- The interpersonal process or system of operations for making decisions about the curriculum planning
- The political process (since some influential agencies make their policies about the curriculum)
- The social process (because it is a 'people process' that humans engage in social interactions)

- The collaborative and co-operative feature (which indicates various technical and human relations skills involved)
- The disjointed incremental system by a rule-of-thumb method (that comes from small or incremental moves and is neither a rational nor a systematic process)

It can be said that Gay does not prescribe what has to be done in curriculum development. Rather, he emphasizes the interpersonal relationship, both political and social processes, the feature of working together, and the non-rational process. This concept of curriculum development (course development) can be found in Morgan's (1991) report. It is a case study with an overall aim of understanding the process of developing and producing a course for external students in a dual-mode Australian university. By conducting the informal interviews and studying historical documents, Morgan analysed the work of course team by taking a critical perspective. In the study, he examined the histories of and the cultural aspect of the university, the faculty, the course and the course team. Overall, Morgan's study describes a complex organisational setting in which both history and culture influence both course development and course production.

Judith Riley (1984a, 1984b, 1984c, 1983) also investigated the practical aspects of course development. But she focused on the process of individuals drafting in course development, i.e., how a course author drafts the course materials that are assigned to him/her as his/her job in a course team. After identifying the tasks of drafting, she claimed that a course author moves around these tasks without fixed sequence. For completing a task and solving its problems, various strategies and tactics are used by course authors. Since each task can be treated by different course authors in different ways, she (Riley, 1984a, p.202) described this phenomenon as '*the elasticity of tasks*'.

Riley pointed out that a course author uses his/her distinctive pattern of strategies and tactics to solve the problems of tasks. It is further claimed by her that the course teams at the UKOU do not follow Tyler's systems model (see section 2.4.1 above) which is underlined in the courses sub-system of the UKOU.

Riley's (1984b, p.224) study includes an attempt to explain 'why commenting and re-drafting is not a simple matter of successive approximation to an initial brief'. After analysing data, she suggested the following three concepts. (1) '*Out-of-step phenomenon*': This refers to the situation that the result of drafting is different from what has been previously shared by both individual course authors themselves and other course team members since individual course authors change their ideas about how to draft a course unit during the process of drafting. In other words, individual course authors already think ahead on the production of different ideas while they work alone on drafting their course unit. This makes other course team members become out-of-step with his/her new thinking (Riley, 1984b, p.222). (2) '*Drafts as snapshots taken from a growing potential unit*': According to Riley (1984b, p.223), a course unit is like a living thing. That is to say, a course unit grows and changes in its author's mind. During the process of drafting, both depth and breadth of a course unit increase with time, she uses 'a snapshot in time' to describe each draft of a course unit located in a course author's expanded stream of thought of a course author. (3) '*Audience shift*': Riley (1984b, p.224) detected that course authors change their audience during the process of drafting course materials -- from (a) course author themselves, to (b) the course team, and in the end to (c) the student. According to her, course authors start drafting course materials as if they are talking to themselves, a kind of sorting out of their ideas. When the work moves to the stage of the second draft, most course authors are able to put their course team in mind and regard the team as the reader of their draft -- they consider what comments might be received from the course team. Only in the preparation of subsequent drafts after the second draft (i.e., after both themselves and their course team have been satisfied), course authors consider the student's need -- the student finally becomes their reader.

The influences on course authors' choices of strategies and tactics to solve the problems during the process of drafting their course materials are grouped by Riley (1984a, p.203) into the following two categories. (1) *Public factors* -- They are the ones that are overt, generally openly discussed. And (2) *private factors* -- They are the ones that are covert,

only admitted to among trusted contacts. These two groups of reasons that comprise fourteen influential factors are listed in table 2-7.

[Table 2- 7] Factors Influencing Course Authors’ Behaviours of Drafting Course Materials

Factors Influencing Course Authors’ Behaviours of Drafting Course Materials		
Public factors	(1) Subject matter:	The subject matter of the course and academic traditions, e.g., how open to innovation it is, how strongly hierarchical
	(2) Students:	The characteristics of the students who will take the course, e.g., how much they are assumed to know & are able to do
	(3) University’s policies:	University’s policies and resources for course production, e.g., print limits, schedules
	(4) Official team size:	Official size of the course team
	(5) Team spread:	Spread of the course team between disciplines, faculties, consultants
	(6) Momentum:	At any stage, the decisions and materials already produced in that team, i.e., the role of precedent and the firmness of decisions once made
Private factors	(7) Beliefs:	Individuals’ beliefs about the course they want to prepare, e.g., on what is important, on how to teach
	(8) Commitments:	Individuals’ levels of commitment to this team, their actual availability and energy for it
	(9) Locations and habits:	Office locations relative to each other and habits of working, behaviour in meetings and between them
	(10) Writing styles:	Individuals’ styles of writing in papers to the team and in units
	(11) Desire for status:	Individuals’ personal desire to enhance their own status in the eyes of colleagues inside and outside the university
	(12) Fears:	Individuals’ insecurities and fears, e.g., of criticism, of failure
	(13) Chairperson of the course team:	The personality and experience of the chairperson of the course team
	(14) Team interactions:	Course-team interactions, e.g., how friendly, whether internal conflicts

Based on: Riley, J. (1984c, pp.227, 228)

In Riley’s follow-up more structured interviews, most factors in the table were experienced by the staff from different faculties, although these factors operated in different ways and some factors were more apparent to some people than others. Based on the identification of ‘private factors’, she (Riley, 1984c, p.238) concluding her research suggested that for educational technologists their concern can be extended from solely students’ needs to those of staff needs.

Generally speaking, Riley’s research is a comprehensive empirical study of actual course development by a course team. Compared with other empirical studies and other kinds of reports (see section 2.5 below) which are either the general remarks or the reflections of personal experiences, her study is valuable. In the study, she combines the qualitative and

quantitative methods to collect data. This makes her findings persuasive. However, her observation data collected from sitting in course team meetings are not presented in her study. This appears to be a weakness of her study. The narrow focus (i.e., how course authors draft their course materials) also limits the usefulness of the study.

To sum up, section 2.4.3 focuses on practical course development. Here, the practical aspect of course development is highlighted, for instance, the dynamic process, the actual decision making, the personal factor, the interpersonal relationship and the socio-cultural aspect of course development. Course development is in this sense an organic process -- it might grow differently depending on conditions.

As a whole, section 2.4 reviews course development in distance education. The report covers the foundations of course design, the guidelines on course development in distance education and the practical curriculum/course development. Overall, the following three points are highlighted here. (1) For developing a course for distance education, to understand the front-end systems design, the theoretical underpinnings of distance teaching and the use of technology is important. (2) There are considerable activities involved in course development for distance education, which can be rationally organised in advance. (3) Unlike what is mentioned in the guidelines on course development, the practical course development emphasizes, for example, the dynamics of course development, the communication between course developers, the individual attributes of course developers and the influences of environments.

From the above review, it is understood that the development of a course for distance teaching and learning comprises a number of activities. It becomes the common phenomenon that a group of people works together to develop a course for distance education. The last section of the chapter thus reviews the teams for course development.

2.5 Teams for course development

Developing courses through the course team approach can be seen in higher education and further education (Tansley, 1989). This section only concentrates on the teams for course development in distance education. It firstly discusses the types of teams for course development. It afterwards narrows down to a special one -- the course team of the UKOU and its associates. In other words, this section comprises the following two parts.

- Types of teams for course development
- The course team of the UKOU and its associates

2.5.1 *Types of teams for course development*

There are various types of course development teams in the practice of distance education. Mason and Goodenough (1981, pp.105-113) summarised them as the following five basic models.

- (1) *The content specialist only*: This refers to the situation that the individual academics develop their courses by recording their class lectures on tapes and preparing the necessary notes and diagrams. The University of Waterloo in Canada exemplifies it.
- (2) *The content specialist plus the editor*: In this model, the second role, i.e., the editor, is involved. But, the function of the editor varies according to the particular needs. For example, the editor in some cases helps the content specialist only on correcting grammar and spelling, and checking pagination, etc. In other cases, the editor may supervise the translation of lessons. Alternatively, the editor can act as the 'student' who asks for clarification and react to the length, difficulties and gaps of the drafted course material. The professional skills of an editor in a publishing firm can also be brought into the work of course development if the editor possesses such skills.

- (3) *The content specialist plus the transformer*: In this model, the editor acting as the transformer of academic subject-matter uses his/her expertise on educational technology to help the content specialist with the purpose of making the course materials more suitable to distance learners. In other words, the transformer -- the skilled professional communicator who mediates between the content specialist and the reader (Macdonald-Ross & Waller, 1976, p.142) -- massages the draft manuscript (which is written by the content specialist) into the distance learning materials. In this model, the content specialist has only limited control over the final product of course materials once the draft is handed over.
- (4) *The instructional design centred*: This indicates that an instructional design team has control over the whole process of course development. The work of course development starts from a briefing offered by the instructional design team to the contracted content specialist. The content specialist, following the principles given by the instructional design team, prepares the first drafts of course materials which are afterwards commented on by both the instructional design team and external content specialists. The contracted content specialist prepares the second (and further) drafts based on the comments. After the drafts are finally agreed, they go to the technical staff (e.g., the editor, the broadcast producer) for production.
- (5) *The course team*: This, noticeably the course team of the UKOU, generally consists of the content specialist, the educational technologist, the course manager, the editor, the media specialist, and the secretary. These people work together in the course team through the whole process of course development to construct the course and produce the course materials. Other workers join in the course team at different time when they are needed.

Lewis and Meed (1986, pp.129-131) elsewhere suggested the following eight routes to produce courses.

- (1) *One content specialist only*: This person is responsible for all stages of course creation and production. For instance, he/she designs and writes printed course

materials. He/she teaches in audio-visual materials. He/she answers queries.

And he/she marks both assignments and examination papers.

- (2) *Two or three content specialists*: An example of this is that one person writes the first draft. The second person re-writes. And the third person is responsible for the final copy.
- (3) *'Circus'*: This is that people work together as a team in an intensive writing period (1-3 weeks). These team members already know and like each other. They agree with their approaches to the course.
- (4) *The author and the editor*: In this case, the editor's role is broad. He/she, usually being a part-time content specialist, does the job of selecting, training, contracting and communicating with the author.
- (5) *The content specialist and the transformer*: The transformer translates the raw content produced by the content specialist into the materials that are suitable for open and distance education.
- (6) *The transformer only*: In this model, there is no content specialist involved. The transformer selects resource materials and transforms them into the learning materials for open and distance education.
- (7) *The content specialist, the open-learning specialist (the instructional designer) and the editor*: This type of team includes the open-learning specialist (the instructional designer). Since the open-learning specialist (the instructional designer) may not have the skill of editing, the team needs an editor.
- (8) *The multi-skill course team*: The small multi-skill course team is exemplified by the team with one academic, one instructional designer, one editor, one visual specialist and one media specialist if needed. The large course team refers to the type of course teams running by the UKOU. The multi-institutional course team is the one that contracts a few people from different institutions to produce course materials.

The above-mentioned routes overlap with Mason and Goodenough's categorisation.

Smith (1980) also discussed the type of teams for course development. He addressed the following five models.

- (1) *The course team model*: This is represented by the course team at, for instance, the UKOU, Athabasca University in Canada and Deakin University in Australia.
- (2) *The author / editor model*: This refers to the situation that the contracted author writes the course materials which are edited by the specialist who is within the correspondence school or the department of independent studies. The examples of this model are the ones in the Extension Department at Wisconsin University and at Penn State University in the USA.
- (3) *The author / faculty model*: This happens at the FernUniversität in Germany -- it contracts the outside expert to write the course materials that are afterwards vetted by the permanent academic staff of the university.
- (4) *The educational advisor model*: This is generated from, for example, the practice of Murdoch University in Australia. In the university, the educational advisers who are the staff of the Department of External Studies spend much of their time working in the teaching departments helping the faculty to develop external courses in a systematic way. In this model, the educational advisors only provide advice; it is the course author who makes the final decision on content, standards and format.
- (5) *The intuition model*: This model is derived from the practices in some older established institutions where the course is developed depending on academic intuition rather than either depending on workers with specific roles or systematic procedures.

Holmberg (1995, pp.136-137) criticised Smith's second 'author / editor model' as not being much different from the third 'author / faculty model' -- the third model is simply a variation of the second model. Moreover, he viewed the fourth 'educational adviser model' also as a kind of 'author / editor model'. As to Smith's fifth 'intuition model', since no particular procedure is adopted for course development other than the individual course author's intuition, Holmberg did not intend to include it in his concept of course development teams. In the end, Holmberg accepted the categorisation of the following two models.

- The author / the editor model
- The course team model

Holmberg further suggested that since all the models have advantages and disadvantages, there is no so-called 'best' model. The decision on selecting a model of course development depends on what the institution needs: a large-scale or a small-scale approach. Additionally, Holmberg claimed that it relates to industrialisation of the system for course provision in an institution.

Regarding the course team of the UKOU, it will be discussed in details in section 2.5.2.

With the criticisms of UKOU's course teams, non-traditional course teams could be a means of improving the efficiency of standard teams. Riley (1981) pointed out that the standard full-scale course team model is in fact rare. A number of experimental forms of course teams exist, such as the very small team, the small core team with many consultants, joint teams with other institutions, and the use of an academic editor to re-draft course materials which are initially produced by both internal authors and consultants. Lockwood (1994b) argued that UKOU's course team approach is not always possible, desirable or even appropriate. Hawkrigde (1994) introduced, in addition to the course team, the following three alternative teaching teams.

- *The transformer team*: It consists of two teams: (1) an initiating team; (2) a transforming team. Subject-matter experts firstly do their job in an initiating team. Afterwards, their drafted manuscript is given to a transforming team for re-shaping the material from a knowledge-based one into the one suitable for open and distance education.
- *The wrap-around team*: This kind of teaching team develops its own teaching materials based on existing materials. It means that the existing materials are used; the team only provides the teaching materials around the existing materials.
- *The weekend team*: The educational technologist helps subject-matter experts to produce a course in a few weekends. They are 'locked away' in a certain place at weekends in order to concentrate on making a course in a short time.

Compared with the types of course development teams mentioned above, the transformer team has already been addressed there. Both the wrap-around team and the weekend team have not been mentioned yet -- probably because they were initiated in the 1980s. From the emergence of the latter two alternatives of course teams, it can be seen that the focus has shifted from the role of participant to both how the work is done and how to reduce the time of developing the acceptable learning materials.

The foregoing analysis of the teams for course development (Mason & Goodenough, 1981; Lewis & Meed, 1986; Smith, 1980; Holmberg, 1995; Hawkrigde, 1994) are compared in table 2-8 below.

[Table 2- 8] Teams for Course Development

Teams for Course Development				
Mason & Goodenough (1981)	Lewis & Meed (1986)	Smith (1980)	Holmberg (1995)	Hawkrigde (1994)
(1) The content specialist only	(1) One content specialist only	(1) The course team model	(1) The author / the editor model	(1) The course team
(2) The content specialist & the editor	(2) Two or three content specialists	(2) The author / the editor model	(2) The course team model	(2) The transformer team
(3) The content specialist & the transformer	(3) 'Circus'	(3) The author / the faculty model		(3) The wrap-around team
(4) The instructional design centred	(4) The author & the editor	(4) The educational advisor model		(4) The weekend team
(5) The course team	(5) The content specialist & the transformer	(5) The intuition model		
	(6) The transformer only			
	(7) The content specialist & the open-learning specialist (the instructional designer) & the editor			
	(8) The multi-skill course team			

The above table shows that the role of team members is important for organising a team for course development in distance education. The content specialist is treated as the basic team member by most teams. It has happened that only one content specialist or several content specialists have formed a team for course development. However, in other teams, people with different expertise -- particularly the transformer, the educational technologist (the instructional designer) and the editor -- are viewed as key members of teams as well. In these analyses, the course team of the UKOU is always

discussed. Compared with other types of teams, the course team is featured by the widest scope of specialism. The emergence of non-traditional course teams (e.g., the wrap-around team, the weekend team) shows an attempt to both keep the strengths of and remedy the weaknesses of traditional course teams, either from the stages of working, the division of work or the time of working.

To sum up, the review in section 2.5.1 focuses on the types of teams for course development. The literature tells that there are different mixtures of the content specialist, the editor, the transformer, the educational technologist (the instructional designer) and others in a team for course development in different distance teaching institutions. The size of teams thus varies depending on the types of people included -- some are big; some are small. The UKOU's course team is always highlighted in these analyses. The course team is characterised by the team members with the widest diversity of expertise. The emergence of various non-traditional course teams shows that there is a need to adjust the procedures of working, the breakdown of the work and the time for finishing the work.

As has been mentioned before, the course team of the UKOU is formed by widest scope of experts. In order to deepen the understanding of this particular type of team for course development, the literature on the issues of the course teams of the UKOU and its associates is reviewed below.

2.5.2 The course team of the UKOU and its associates

The course team of the UKOU is characterised as a group of people with widest expertise working together through the whole process of constructing a course and producing the course materials. The term 'course team' is generally refers to the course teams at both the UKOU and the associate distance teaching institutions which follow the principles of UKOU's course team.

As time goes by, the course team has undergone changes. Different forms of course team already exist. In the above context, the origin of UKOU's course teams is introduced below.

The course team as the method of developing courses at the UKOU is derived from the suggestion of the Planning Committee that planned the establishment of the University. In its report (Planning Committee, 1969), the project-like basic academic group is framed for the future UKOU.

'The difference in the course structure and teaching methods between the Open University and existing universities, and the emphasis on new and inter-disciplinary subjects makes it probable that the academic staff will work mainly on a flexible project basis, especially in the early years.' (Planning Committee, 1969, p.20)

To explain further why the UKOU needs to operate its course development by teamwork, Perry (1976, p.77), the first vice-chancellor of the University pointed out the following two reasons. (1) The course of the UKOU is supposed to be interdisciplinary in nature and to be taught via multiple media. (2) It is assumed that the university academic staff needs help from both the educational technologist and the media producer in both educating adults and teaching at a distance. Under the circumstances, the interdisciplinary Foundation Course Team for the first-year course of the UKOU is treated as the basic unit of academic organisation (Rumble, 1982, p.86) administratively located in the faculty (Rumble, 1982, p.82). All other systems at the early UKOU were designed to support course teams (Lawrence & Young, 1979, p.2). Although departments are subsequently set up in the faculties of the UKOU, the course team is still kept as the basic administrative unit for course development (Rumble, 1982, p.90). Through the above process, the course team becomes institutionalised within the UKOU.

The course team as a working unit of course development at the UKOU has attracted world-wide interest. Ranges of other distance teaching institutions have adopted this method by either completely copying it or modifying it. It is claimed (Perry, 1976, p.77) that the concept of the course team is one of the most important contributions of the

UKOU. The use of course teams to develop courses at the UKOU thus becomes an approach for course development.

The course team approach was soon widely adopted by distance teaching institutions. Scholars already identify various strengths of the approach. For instance, it is suggested that the major advantage of course teams is the provision of the best expertise available (Holmberg, 1981, p.99). It is also claimed that the greatest benefit of adopting the course team approach is the improvement of quality (Foster, 1992, p.209). The course team approach can, through the process of collaboration with other people in the team, promote the professional development of staff (Foster, 1992, p.210; Wright, 1988, p.12). Moral support from course team members can also be developed (Riley, 1976, p.60), and academic life can be enriched (Foster, 1992, p.210). In addition, 'an improved regard for teaching as a legitimate activity of an academic' is valued (Foster, 1992, p.210). It is suggested that as a result of the work of course teams, the publication of course materials -- which have the names of authors, editors, and producers on the cover -- can help ensure high standards (Mason & Goodenough, 1981, p.113).

Are these suggested advantages inherent in the nature of course team approach? Are there other views on the course teams of the UKOU and its associates? In order to understand more about the course team approach, the relevant issues are discussed here. They cover the models of organising course teams, the group discussion in course teams, course teams and industrialised distance education, the psychological aspect of course team life, and the overall criticisms and queries about the course team approach. In other words, the rest of the section is divided into following five parts.

- Models of organising course teams
- Group discussion in course teams
- Course teams and industrialised distance education
- Psychological aspect of course team life
- Overall criticisms and queries about the course team approach

Models of organising course teams

The course team approach compared with other course development teams has most types of people and most roles. How is this kind of team operated?

Farnes (1991) suggested the following two models for operating a course team.

- *Participative model*: In this model, the team has regular meetings and the team members frequently interact with each other. Decisions of a course are made based on consensus and agreement. The quality of the course can be high if the teamwork is successful. However, the team comparatively needs more time (e.g., more than two years) to work. Most team members should provide full-time commitment to the team.
- *Executive model*: In this model, the chairperson of the team is powerful with full authority. The style of communication between the chairperson and team members is top-down. There are two special roles in this type of course teams: (1) the transformer (possibly played by the chairperson of the course team), and (2) the validator (the external assessor). If a course unit submitted is not good enough, the transformer re-drafts the material. The validator evaluates all the course materials. The quality of the course can be high if the chairperson of the team is good enough. The whole process of developing a course is comparatively short (e.g., one year or less). Only the chairperson and the course manager of the team need to have full-time commitment to the team.

Borremans (1996, p.115) also discussed how a course team operates. He suggested three models as below.

- *Plenary model*: All the experts work together during the whole process.
- *Relay model*: Tasks are fulfilled one after another in a linear way.
- *Star model*: A central person or (small) group with the role of co-ordination with other experts involved exists within a course team.

In comparison, the above two studies have overlapping areas. The ‘plenary model’ of Borremans is parallel to the ‘participative model’ of Farnes and the ‘relay model’ of Borremans is similar to the ‘executive model’ of Farnes. With respect to the ‘star model’ of Borremans, it is like the one in-between. The categorisation of models of operating course teams suggested by Farnes and Borremans is listed in table 2-9.

[Table 2- 9] Models of Operating Course Teams

Models of Operating Course Teams	
Farnes’s (1991)	Borremans’s (1996)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The participative model• The executive model	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The plenary model• The relay model• The star model

A team can be operated democratically, autocratically, or eclectically by devolving certain powers to some people on the team other than the chairperson of the course team. Each model has its advantages and disadvantages. Scholars have different preferences for the way of operating a course team. On the one hand, Tight (1985, p.50) for instance valued the executive model. It was because he believed that ‘the average course may well be best served by one or two individuals determining the curriculum, methodology, assessment and so forth, and then finding, commissioning or directing others to produce materials as necessary, subject always to external evaluation’. On the other hand, Mason and Goodenough (1981, p.112) for example favoured the participative model because they suggested that a very democratic atmosphere and the good working relationships among participants of a course team are needed for a successful course team. Mason and Goodenough’s idea was similar to Newey’s (1975) who also believed that a team in the real sense is only under the following situation. That is, the chairperson of the course team appreciates other course team members’ contributions and tries to work on every aspect of the course together with other participants of the team. Newey even sadly pointed out that some chairpersons of course teams are, however, authoritarians -- this makes other course team members become subordinates. Borremans (1996, p.117) after identifying both ‘thinking’ and ‘doing’ stages in decision-making alternatively suggested that the work of course teams had better be organized fairly democratically in the

'thinking' stage but with more authoritarians in the 'doing' stage. His deliberative thinking is valuable.

Another operational issue is the involvement of permanent academics in course teams. It was argued by Mason and Goodenough (1981, p.112) that the permanent academic staff are needed in a course team because they can ensure the availability, commitment, co-ordination and especially the participation in the committee-like course team meetings which need the commitment and time of members. Mason and Goodenough's argument can, by linking with the analysis of Farnes (1991), be developed further: the permanent employment in the institutions is especially required for most course team members if the democratic way to run a course team is adopted. Tight (1985, p.49) viewed the issue from another angle -- rather than the emphasis on permanent central academics he claimed that both management and distribution are more important for the success of course teams.

The size of a course team is also discussed. Starting with nine to sixteen people in a course team for the first-year courses of the UKOU, the size of the course team of the UKOU soon expands to two or three times that of the original size (Perry, 1976, p.85). Although it is pointed out that 'the team size is governed by resources available' (Kember & Mezger, 1990), for example, due to including various experts, the size of a course team tends to expand.

Batten (1980, pp.10-11) summarised Stanford's (1980) comparison between the large and small course teams as follows. The large course team is favoured from the institution's point of view since it is suitable for the course which is greatly subscribed to and for outside marketing. However, the small course team is preferred in terms of teaching because it is easy to provide the flexible pedagogy, the up-dated course materials and the rapport between students and teachers. Gagan (1981, pp.67-68) identified the benefits of having more than one person in a course team. For instance, it facilitates the receipt of reminders, support and encouragement from other participants of the team. If there are more people in a course team, the weaknesses of a smaller course team, e.g., imbalance, prejudice and idiosyncrasy, can be avoided.

The weaknesses of big course teams are discussed and solutions are provided. Lawrence and Young (1979, p.3) for example suggested forming sub-groups in a course team which are coordinated by the chairperson of the course team since the larger the team the more team members are influenced by unconscious social processes. Wright (1988, p.13) proposed that the size of a course team can be decreased when course authors gradually become experienced. Stringer (1980) from the Athabasca University in Canada reported his experience of being involved in 'lean course teams' that only consist of an academic, an instructional developer, an editor, a visual designer, and a media consultant. Gagan (1981, p.68) also mentioned the lean course team with an attempted to put forward the 'well-tempered course teams' (Gagan, 1981). His lean team however comprises a central faculty academic, a regional academic, an educational technologist, a course coordinator, an editor and a media consultant (producer). Mills (1981) alternatively introduced the combination of a small course team and the use of 'imported' course materials for giving students opportunities of studying independently in libraries. Tight (1985, p.49) provided another consideration -- the size of a course team can be reduced by combining a number of roles together. In other words, he suggested that a course team member should take multiple roles for various functions. Especially, the 'non-academic' skills (such as, the abilities to work on schedule, to produce course materials without extensive revisions, to organise work effectively, to direct others and to find useful existing materials) were highlighted by him.

The one-person course team is discussed as well. For instance, Stanford's (1980) Australian experience of being in a one-person course team (i.e., one academic in a course team) is that working alone to produce a course was possible but with 'academic loneliness'. He concluded that the use of a one-person course team needs to take the context, i.e., the system of a university, into account. Batten (1980, pp.11-12) in addition to pointing out that the one-person course team can be used for the third and fourth level courses which have small student population argued that academic's general absences from work cannot be ignored while the one-person course team is considered.

Group discussion in course teams

People express their opinions in course team meetings. The course team meeting is a formal place for team members to work. At the UKOU and a number of distance teaching institutions, people regularly comment on each other's opinions and drafted course materials in course team meetings. From the literature reviewed, it can be seen that scholars have different views on this phenomenon.

It is claimed that the academic freedom of designing and developing courses (Mason & Goodenough, 1981, p.109), an intellectually challenging atmosphere (Mason & Goodenough, 1981b, p.113) and the stimulus of discussion (Riley, 1976, p.60) are advantages of the course team approach.

However, elsewhere it is pointed out that the curtailing of academic freedom (i.e., academics feel that their academic freedom is restricted in their course team) becomes a disadvantage of course team approach (Wright, 1988, p.12). Another point is that the younger academic is unable or unwilling to challenge the drafted course materials produced by senior academics (Mason & Goodenough, 1981, p.113).

The issue of ideological conflict is also raised (Mason & Goodenough, 1981, p.112; Newey, 1975). Perry (1976, p.77) argued that the academics of the UKOU 'would have different and inevitable conflicting thoughts and ideas which would somehow have to be reconciled with each other to lead to an agreed final version'. In other words, Perry believed that because of the inevitability of conflicting thoughts, what the course team can finally achieve is a coherent course, rather than a course as good as academics expect by using their academic freedom. Harris (1987, p.100) even pushed the argument further: 'in practice, ... picture of fully integrated and genuinely collective effort can be misleading.' In his view, the course developed by a course team is not coherent at all. For reducing the difficulty derived from conflict, the experience from Monk and O'Shea (1981) was that the course that they have developed was produced with an almost complete absence of negotiation by very detailed advanced planning and rigid separation

of roles and responsibilities. They claimed that their course is produced much faster than the formal model.

According to Drake (1979, p.52), the course team begins to dis-integrate when course authors start to write and comment on course materials. He felt that on the one hand the feedback from other course authors is frequently limited in both quantity and quality. Conversely, the external course assessor, who comments on all the drafted course materials for the course team, provides more help. The following two reasons are suggested by Drake, which explain why sometimes only limited comments are received from other course authors. (1) The wide scope of subject matter makes individual course authors feel that they are not capable of commenting on other's work. (2) There is an implicit thought in course author's minds -- other course authors will not, as a return, give me harsh criticism if I do not give them a hard time. On the other hand, the course authors who are shy and less talkative influence the work of the whole team less than particularly talkative authors do.

There is a claim that both innovation and creativity are encouraged by group interaction within a course team (Northcott, referred by Rumble, 1986, pp.169). But according to Farnes (1991), these might be limited if the executive model of operating the course team is adopted. Lawrence and Young (1979, p.7) even pointed out that the creativity of academics is doubly decreased in a course team. This means that it is firstly impeded from receiving other people's criticisms during the process of working in a course teams. It is further reduced by the personal withdrawal of some academics -- to protect their inner worlds from the attack of others. Mason and Goodenough (1981, p.113) therefore suggested that the saying -- mutual criticism in a course team makes for a course with high quality -- is merely like a theory, not the reality.

From another angle, Lawrence and Young (1979, p.3) stressed that the criticism given by the participants in the course team is the most threatening aspect of the course team approach since 'it is felt to be an attack on the person and not just about competency'. To probe the issue further, they analyse the public myth of academics -- for instance, academics should be independent. According to them, this myth implies that 'it is

difficult to be dependent on other people to learn'. Influenced by the myth, academics act as if they were totally independent in order to preserve themselves and their sense of autonomy. They therefore attack each other's work. Lawrence and Young (1979, p.4) coined this situation as the exercise of '*pseudo-independence*'.

Course teams and industrialised distance education

Previously in section 2.3.3, criticism of instructional industrialism has been pointed out. In addition to this, Holmberg (1981, pp.99-100) argued that the course team approach might lead to a de-personalised style of presentation that is against the style of didactic conversation. Moreover, the course team approach tends to support the ready-made course materials rather than the one that is treated as the guide to problem solving. In other words, this approach might have the drawbacks of 'impeding personal approaches' and 'knowledge being presented more as a finished product than as a complex of problems under development' (Holmberg, 1995, p.135). Drake (1979) similarly argued that the course team emphasizes more content than teaching.

On the other hand, as has been mentioned earlier in 2.4.3, Riley (1984a) argued that UKOU's academic course team members do not appear to follow the mainstream traditional Tyler's model (Tyler, 1949). This implies that in addition to general approaches individual course authors have their own distinctive patterns of strategies and tactics to solve the problems of drafting their distance education materials. It is thus suggested (Riley, 1984a) that the team does not seem to have much direct influence on individual course authors once course units are allocated for drafting. A reliance on the quality of individual work is hence highlighted (Riley, 1984a, p.192).

Other aspects of the work of course teams that are related to industrialisation are also pointed out. For instance, the response to demands for new materials is slow (Hawkrige, 1994, p.98). The time scales become rigid (Hawkrige, 1994, p.98). It is important for a course team to meet deadlines (Mason & Goodenough, 1981, p.112). And the cost is high (Perry, 1976, p.91). Generally speaking, the course team approach makes course

development very lengthy and expensive and the courses developed by this approach are soon out-of-date (Daniel, 1996, p.196).

Psychological aspect of course team life

The overall picture of the psychological aspect of course team life has been investigated. For example, Mason (1976) suggested the following seven-staged framework to depict the change of the energy (i.e., the motivation, interest and driving force) of course team members.

- In the first '*initiation*' stage, course team members are full of enthusiasm. Plenty of new ideas and different possibilities jump out of their minds.
- In the second '*involvement*' stage, course team members are deeply involved in researching and thinking about what should be selected for the course and how to present the course. The work of course teams at this stage becomes focused.
- In the third '*separation*' stage, course authors start to get stuck. Difficulties and the feeling of hopelessness emerge. The involvement in the team thus decreases.
- In the fourth '*commitment*' stage, an entirely new energy is obtained which is greater than the initial one. Course team members commit themselves to the work of their teams and have the feeling that their difficulties will be overcome.
- In the fifth '*insight*' stage, some sort of solution as a flash of insight occurs.
- In the sixth '*holding back*' stage, the insight is tested, developed, and explored in order to get the confirmation that this is the right way to solve problems.
- In the seventh '*completion*' stage, the piece of work ends and the difficulty is eventually resolved.

Mason (1976, p.29) further explained that these seven stages of energy do not generally either occur discretely or in an order. Several characteristics of energy might appear together in the same time; and the occurrence of the characteristics of energy might not follow the sequence drawn in this framework.

Lawrence and Young (1979, p.3) also sketched the life of a course team. They combined the stages of the work of course teams with the psychological status of course team members (as seen in the following quotation).

'What seems to happen in CTs [i.e., course teams] ... is that they start with promise. People, on the whole, are enthusiastic. Then they develop a destructive environment that by the end of the life of the CT has become a punitive one. Course material is produced but usually by a very small residue of the original CT.' (Lawrence & Young, 1979, p.3)

The feelings of course team members affect their work in the course team. For instance, '*the deadline syndrome*' coined by Newey (1975) describes the following phenomenon of the work of course teams at the UKOU. Course teams are continuously pressurized to complete certain tasks in time in order to hand over to the division of Operations for printing. Under the pressure, some course team members are absent from course team meetings when their deadlines are approaching. They have less and less intentions of reading, giving comments, or contributing to the work of other members. In other words, they under the circumstances intend to do their own things rather than work as a team. Drake (1979, p.51) explained why it is difficult for academics to meet deadlines. He pointed out that the course team approach fails to recognise the special characteristics of academics. That is, most academics do not have a strong desire to define solutions or to implement them. But on the contrary, academics are keen on exploring possibilities and articulating problems.

The emotional life of the course team is also explored by Nicodemus (1992a, 1992b, 1984). Taking the psychodynamic perspective, he (Nicodemus, 1992a, p.14) pointed out that the process of developing a team is full of anxieties (see the following quotation).

'In the beginning is chaos, an association of individuals who only have an idea about a shared task but no shared experiences of roles they must take to complete the task. They have an abundance of anxieties, however, about commitment and trust -- of others abilities and capabilities for tolerance and patience. ... As work begins, structures begin to form as differences emerge between individuals within the team and between the team and groups outside -- differences in roles and tasks. ... Anxieties are expressed through relationships that also test out the realities of the situation. ... The alternative is the containment of anxieties through being able to think about them rather than acting on them, as if a thought equals an action.' (Nicodemus, 1992a, pp.12-13)

Nicodemus (1992b, p.9) further identified certain obvious sources of tension and listed them by corresponding with the stages of the course process (see table 2-10).

[Table 2- 10] Sources of Tension in Different Stages of Course Process

Stage of Course Process	Sources of Tension
(1) Course planning (1a) approval (1b) subsequent courses	• Short-term vs. permanent
(2) Course development (2a) course team (2b) course content (2c) resource approval (2d) scheduling	• Individual vs. team • UKOU control vs. BBC control • Teacher vs. writer • Academic vs. teaching • Knowledge vs. use • Ideals vs. reality • Academic vs. administration
(3) Course production (3a) Operations division	• Demands vs. support
(4) Course presentation (4a) presentation course team (4b) regions (4c) centre (e.g., Examination and Assessment Boards) (4d) course evaluation (4e)	• Centre vs. periphery • Course requirements vs. tutor discretion • Hopes vs. disappointment • Success vs. failure • Learning vs. judgement

Based on: Nicodemus, R. (1992b, pp.7-9)

To understand the dynamics of a course team, Nicodemus (1992b, pp.10-11) argued that the boundaries of a team are defined by the team through emotional experiences between individuals or subgroups. The task of a team becomes more real emotionally through the relationships available in the present although it may be clear in terms of intellectual content (Nicodemus, 1992a, p.4). For teamwork, the containment of depressive anxieties is the most formidable challenge. He believed that through sharing three types of experiences -- rational, emotional and spiritual -- the idea of a team evolves.

Overall Criticisms and queries about the course team approach

From the above discussions, it is revealed that the course team approach has received a range of queries and criticisms. For example, Lubbock and others (1990, p.4) questioned the idea of continuing to use a course team as the basic unit of course development,

although they still concluded that course teams are in general desirable and needed. To explode the myth (i.e., the use of course teams is an ideal method to develop courses), Crick (1980) from Australia examined the psychopathology of actual course team life. He warned that 'any institution engaged in team-teaching must pay serious attention to the pathological potential of the team approach and set about easing the problems' (Crick, 1980, p.129).

Drake (1979, p.53) even cursed the course team approach by describing the course team as a 'cancer of the university'. Costello (1979) disagreed with Drake's above criticism, but he agreed that a number of course teams do not work very well. His suggestion is that the inexperience of academics in management should be recognised. Blowers (1979) argued from another angle that the course team approach should carry on and cannot be discarded although various problems have emerged. His claim is that the course team approach cannot be looked at from élitist point of view; and there is a need to think of how to nurture and improve the working relationships of course team members.

Tight (1985) synthesised the published discussions by forming the following two groups of general views. (1) The basic concept of course teams is good. (2) The problems of course teams are derived from the practitioners' faults. His own proposal is that the standard course team of the UKOU is not needed; what is needed is another form of course team.

To sum up, section 2.5.2 discusses the issues of the course team. They are divided into the following five groups: the models of organising course teams, the group discussion in course team meetings, course teams and industrialised distance education, the psychological aspect of course team life, and the overall criticisms and queries about the course team approach. From the review, it is apparent that these issues are important. The way to understand the course team approach is not merely to see how a course is developed. Rather, the course team itself is worth investigating.

As a whole, section 2.5 reviews the literature on teams for course development. It comprises two parts, first, the types of teams for course development, and second, the

course team of the UKOU and its associates. The following three points need to be noted.

(1) Different types of team for course development exist. (2) The course team of the UKOU is a special type of team. It has strengths and weaknesses. To reduce the drawback, the initial pattern of course team has been modified in a number of ways. (3) The course team has been discussed from the following five perspectives: the models of organising course teams, group discussion in course teams, course teams and industrialised distance education, the psychological aspect of course team life, and the overall criticisms and queries about the course team approach. These perspectives show how scholars have examined the course team approach.

2.6 Summary of the chapter

This chapter comprises four main parts: (1) the general background of the distance teaching university; (2) the system for course provision at a distance teaching university; (3) the course development in distance education; and (4) the teams for course development.

The chapter starts from providing the general background of the distance teaching university. The review in section 2.2 firstly sketches of the practice in the field of distance education. For this, the notion of 'distance education' is defined. The types of practice are outlined. The section secondly draws the profile of the distance teaching university (normally called 'open university'). To do so, the existing distance teaching universities are listed. The features of the distance teaching university are pointed out. Both the advantages and disadvantages of setting up a distance teaching university are discussed. The threats to existing distance teaching universities are analysed in the end of the section.

This chapter next discusses the system for course provision at a distance teaching university. The section 2.3 begins at the close scrutiny of the notion of 'course'. The system for course provision is next reviewed. The system for course provision is set up

for the work of course construction and course distribution, whilst course construction includes course approval, course development and course production. For this study, the main interest is course development. The third review in this section is the debate on the extent of industrialisation of the system. The debate is derived from Otto Peters's claim - distance education is the most industrialised form of teaching and learning. But, it is discussed if the nature of distance education is industrialisation. No matter what the answer is, the debate shows how important the system for course provision at a distance teaching university is.

The third section of this chapter narrows down the review to the course development in distance education. In section 2.4, the foundations of course design are firstly reviewed, which covers the following three issues, first, the types of distance teaching, second, course design and educational technology, and third, the pedagogical concerns on distance teaching. Although the new types of distance teaching, e.g., on-line teaching, have emerged in last few years, the understanding of the systems design is still important since the most existing systems for course construction of many distance teaching universities are structured by adopting this concept. Here, the classic rational model (or called the means-end model, the objectives model) suggested by Ralph W. Tyler is introduced. As to how the UKOU adopts the notion of systems course design for providing courses, this will be presented in the report on the system for course construction at the UKOU in Chapter 4.

Regarding the pedagogical concerns on distance teaching, the discussions fall into the following two groups, first, the theoretical underpinnings of distance teaching, and second, distance teaching and technology. To introduce the theoretical underpinnings of distance teaching, both Michael Moore's transactional distance and Börje Holmberg's guided didactic conversation are outlined. The relationship between distance teaching and technology can be understood from the identification of the generations of distance education. Following the development of technology, distance teaching has been marching into different eras. The second focus of the section is the guidelines on course development in distance education, which prescribe what should be done and how things

should be done. By discussing the rational guidelines (suggested by, e.g., Brain Lewis, Roger Lewis and John Meed, Richard Freeman and Roger Lewis, and Derek Rowntree), the need to set up the network of various activities for providing courses is identified. The section thirdly discusses the practical curriculum/course development. The literature (e.g., the studies of Decker Walker, Judith Riley and Robert Nicodemus) shows that it is important for us to understand how the curriculum/course is actually, rather than rationally, developed. All the personal and interpersonal factors as well as the influences of team itself and of the institution where the course is provided cannot be overlooked.

This chapter in the end discusses the teams for course development. There are two foci in section 2.5, first, the types of teams for course development, and second, the course team of the UKOU and its associates. The teams are often differentiated by the types of team members, such as the content specialist, the educational technologist (the instructional designer), the editor, the transformer and the others. In comparison, the course team of the UKOU is formed with the biggest number of experts who are needed for course development. The emergence of non-traditional course teams (e.g., the wrap-around team, the weekend team) shows that the format of course teams has already been modified with an attempt to reduce/extend the weaknesses/advantages of traditional course teams.

The section secondly focuses on the course teams of the UKOU and its associates. The issues comprise the models of organising course teams, the group discussion in course teams, course teams and industrialised distance education, the psychological aspect of course team life, and the overall criticisms and queries about the course team approach. The reviewed literature tells us that the course team is a complicated phenomenon. It relates to both people who are involved in and the institution where the course team is formed.

The next chapter, i.e., Chapter 3, will report how this study is conducted. It will cover the process of carrying out the study, the research methods adopted and their underlying theoretical considerations. Chapter 4 will draw the background of the study by introducing the UKOU with particular foci on its undergraduate courses and its system

for course construction. Chapter 5, 6 and 7 will use the oral data collected from the fieldwork to describe how the course teams are set up; how people actually work in course team meetings as a team; and how course team members think of their team and their team work. Finally, Chapter 8 will discuss all the findings drawn from previous chapters by linking with relevant literature. Finally, overall conclusions will be drawn and discussed.

Chapter 3

Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This chapter provides an account of the research methodology of this study and the process of carrying out the study. In terms of methodological decisions, this study, with the aim to explore the nature of the course team approach, adopted the naturalist paradigm and followed the approach of ethnography to certain extent. The methods of interviews, observations and document collection were used. Data were collected from the course teams of three undergraduate courses in the School of Education of the UKOU. All the details of methodological arrangements and considerations are delineated in this chapter.

Regarding the way to present the methodology of a research, Burgess (1984b), Walford (1991b) and others urged on the 'first person accounts' with an emphasis on the researcher's personal experiences. Their advocacy of autobiographical accounts raises the importance of examining the researcher's reflections during the course of carrying out a research. Based on the above understanding, this chapter -- unlike a technical report only featuring objectivity -- presents both objective and subjective aspects of the study. At the

centre of the chapter is the researcher. For instance, this chapter presents the researcher's decisions, her actions and the social and political contexts around her and her study. Since the researcher's continuous reflections interact with the shape the study, this study keeps evolving during the whole process.

In this study, a number of activities last for a long time and certain activities happen simultaneously. It is difficult to break the continuous process of these activities. In order to present the methodological accounts easily, this chapter is divided into the following four main parts.

- Methodological paradigm
- Pre-fieldwork phase
- Fieldwork
- Post-fieldwork phase

3.2 Methodological paradigm

This study adopts the *qualitative* approach. To justify it, the features of qualitative and quantitative research are compared below.

Quantitative research, inspired by positivism, is characterised by, e.g., manipulating variables, statistically generalising results and neutralising procedures (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995, p.4). However, even scientific research is still the social product that is derived from a long process of social construction (Walford, 1991b, p.2). According to Thomas Kuhn (1962, referred by Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995, p.12), what the history of science displays is the replacement of dominant paradigms, which is not simply based on the rational assessment of evidence but occurs when the theoretical presuppositions of paradigms are challenged and replaced; thus the history of science is marked by periods of revolution, not by accumulated knowledge. With the criticism, it is apparent that the scientific claims are not merely the reflections of neutral, rational and independent parts of reality, but their validity is relative to the paradigm within which they are judged.

Thus, the so-called ‘truth’ is questioned. Lincoln and Guba (1985, p.37), for advocating qualitative research, contrasted the positivist and naturalist paradigms in terms of the nature of reality, the relationship of knower to the known, the possibility of generalisation, the possibility of causal linkages and the role of values. The comparison is listed in table 3-1 below.

[Table 3- 1] Comparison of Positivist and Naturalist Paradigms

The Positivist Paradigm	The Naturalist Paradigm
Reality is single, tangible and fragmentable	Realities are multiple, constructed and holistic
Knower and known are independent, a dualism	Knower and known are interactive, in-separable
Time- and context-free generalisations are possible	Only time- and context-bound working hypotheses are possible
There are real causes, temporally precedent to or simultaneous with their effects	All entities are in a state of mutual simultaneous shaping, so that it is impossible to distinguish causes from effects
Inquiry is value-free	Inquiry is value-bound

Based on: Lincoln and Guba (1985, p.37)

With the above understanding, it was decided that this study would take the view of *naturalism*. This research believed that the reality of course teams / course team work is constructed with multi-facets and should be studied holistically. The researcher cannot be completely independent of what she wants to investigate (i.e., course teams / course team work) when she carries out the research. The researcher should interpret the data in terms of the particulars of course teams / course team work rather than law-like generalisations. All entities of course teams / course team work must be in a state of mutual simultaneous shaping so that it is difficult to distinguish causes from effects. And the inquiry of this study must be value-bound.

Furthermore, Jarvis (1999) examining the role of practitioner-researchers argued that the research into practice must take the form of qualitative case studies. Burgess (1985, p.8) pointed out that one of the characteristics of qualitative research is the concern with social processes as well as meaning. He further stated that a natural setting is the place for carrying out a qualitative research. To respond to the suggestions, this study which would investigate the practice of the UKOU by a practitioner-researcher from another distance teaching university was designed to take the form of a qualitative case study.

With the focus on the social process of course teams / course team work, the study was to be carried out in a natural setting.

Regarding the qualitative study, there are ranges of varieties. For instance, the following seven types are identified from British qualitative studies: symbolic interactionism, anthropology, sociolinguistics, ethnomethodology, democratic evaluation, neo-Marxist ethnography and feminism (Atkinson et al., 1988). The diversity of approaches shows that there is no standardised and fixed mode of carrying out a qualitative research. The form of a qualitative research varies depending on what the research is going to investigate. About this study, it was decided, based on the nature of the research problem, that this study would follow the approach of *ethnography* to a certain extent. According to Hammersley and Atkinson (1995, p.1), the ethnographer participates in people's daily life for an extended period of time watching what happens, listening to what is said, asking questions and collecting other available data in order to understand the research issue. In this study, the ethnographic methodology was adopted during the process of carrying out the study to the extent depending on the actual situation.

With respect to the features of a qualitative research, the use of mixed methodological strategies can be detected from existing literature. Patton (1990, p.195) distinguished the difference between the pure paradigm and the mixed strategy in terms of doing a research. According to him, apart from the pure qualitative and quantitative paradigms, it is possible to have different research strategies by mixing the qualitative research design, qualitative data analysis with quantitative research design and quantitative data analysis. In other words, the qualitative research is, arguably, only related to the collection of qualitative data. It is a matter of degree how naturalistic a qualitative study is. Regarding this study, its general features of methodology are listed below.

- This study followed the approach of ethnography to the extent dictated by the actual situation.
- It started from a naturalistic inquiry.
- It followed a qualitative research design.

- The data analysis was mainly qualitative with a small amount of quantitative data analysis.

To sum up, section 3.2 explains why this study adopted the naturalist paradigm and was qualitative research. Generally speaking, this study followed the approach of ethnography to a certain extent. It began with a naturalistic inquiry. With the qualitative research design, this study mainly used the qualitative data analysis with a small amount of quantitative data analysis as appropriate.

3.3 Pre-fieldwork phase

Pre-fieldwork phase preceded the main fieldwork. The key work in pre-fieldwork phase comprised the following four parts.

- Gaining access to research setting
- Sampling of cases (selection of courses / course teams)
- Sampling within cases
- Exploratory work (the pre-fieldwork interviews)

3.3.1 *Gaining access to research setting*

To gain access to research setting is one of the most important issues for a qualitative study. Burgess (1984a) recalling his experience of gaining access for his research described that it happened in different phases of study process. For this study, there are three types of access.

- The first is the access to the UK.
- The second is the access to the UKOU.
- The third is the access to courses / course teams.

In order to gain the first access, the researcher applied for a scholarship to study abroad when she was in Taiwan, and aimed at the PhD programme in the UK. As to the second

access, the researcher became a research student of the UKOU from the 1992 academic year. This helped her to not only investigate the practice of the UKOU but also to immerse herself in the UKOU as an insider. On the campus, the researcher with the dual roles of researcher and student was immediately subjected to the giant mechanism of the UKOU. In order to understand the jargons, culture and systems of the UKOU quickly, the researcher told herself that some of her preoccupation -- mainly from the education and the work experiences in her own country -- needed to be put aside. With respect to gaining the third access, i.e., the access to courses / course teams, it connects with the sampling of cases (i.e., the selection of courses / course teams), which is reported below.

3.3.2 Sampling of cases (selection of courses / course teams)

In this study, the sampling of cases (i.e., the selection of courses / course teams) was the first stage of sampling. Since the UKOU offered a wide range of courses (see Chapter 4), there was a need for this study to select only a few course teams to have a close look.

Patton (1990, p.169) pointed out that the sample in a qualitative research is often selected purposefully. 'Purposeful sampling' enables the researcher to select information-rich cases for study in depth, from which the researcher can investigate deeply about the researched issues according to the purpose of the research. In this study, the researched course teams were selected purposefully. The following decision was firstly made.

- This study would investigate the undergraduate courses in the School of Education of the UKOU.

The reasons for making this decision are listed below.

- The undergraduate programme is the basic programme of the University that started from the first year of teaching of the University.
- It was the biggest programme of study of the University in 1992, with 80,212 students (on a head count basis) which is about 70 per cent of the whole student number (115,255 students) in that year (Open University, 1994a, p.7).

- Other distance teaching universities might get some insights from this exploration since the undergraduate programme is also the basic body of their educational provision.
- It matched the researcher's academic background and work experiences since the researcher got her MEd degree and taught a number of courses in the discipline of 'education' in the undergraduate programme of the NOU in Taiwan as a course tutor as well as a course author.

However, after checking the 'Courses Information Bulletin' (Open University, 1992a) and consulting the sub-dean in courses of the School of Education, it was realised that only a few undergraduate courses were offered by the School in each year. Most of them either were re-made or had already been presented for several years. In other words, the School did not offer new courses every year. Although some courses were labelled as 'new' courses, they in fact had the origins from certain courses which were already presented. Hence, the hope of carrying out the main fieldwork in the course teams of the truly new undergraduate courses in the School became slim.

There were only three undergraduate courses which were being developed by the School at the beginning of 1993. One was in the early stage of course development. Another was in the first stage of developing the first phase of a rolling re-make (i.e., to re-make a course portion by portion while the course is still presented for a couple of years with an aim to become a completely new course in the end). The other was partly in the final stage of course development and partly in the phase of course production. After realising the situation in the School, it was considered that this study would select undergraduate courses either from these three courses (which were still in the phase of course development) or from other courses (which were already developed).

In this study, to do sampling in above-mentioned courses linked with certain staff members. Hammersley and Atkinson (1995) pointed out that the identification of the formal 'gatekeepers' (or the informal sponsors) and the receipt of their permission (or support) are the first step in gaining entry to the data. They believed that these negotiations draw on interpersonal resources and strategies. To do so, the issue of

building trust and developing relationships (Measor & Woods, 1991) becomes important. In this study, the researcher had no easy access to course teams since the researcher was a new comer of the UKOU at that time and just a student of the University. In this stage, the researcher's supervisor played a key role. He initiated the contact with a staff who was the chairperson of a course team of an undergraduate course offered by the School, which just finished the work of course development. The researcher afterwards interviewed the staff. In the meeting, the researcher got to know who were the other core course team members. When the researcher described this study to the course manager of the course, she suggested that the researcher should also talk with another course manager in the School, whose course seemed to be suitable for this study because this undergraduate course just started the work of course development. The researcher thus met the second course manager. She showed a positive attitude to the investigation into her course and was willing to take the researcher to meet the chairperson of her course team. In the mean time, she mentioned that the researcher might be interested in another undergraduate course offered by the School, which she knew about and which was also in the early stage of course development. Through her introduction, the researcher soon met the course team members of the third course. They invited the researcher to look at their course. Therefore, by the middle of 1993, the researcher successfully made the contact with the course teams of three undergraduate courses in the School of Education through the meetings with gatekeepers. Since it was felt that this study might be able to collect enough empirical data from three course teams, the work of sampling cases (i.e., the selection of courses / course teams) thus stopped. In other words, at that time, it was decided that this study would examine the above-mentioned three courses. Their names used in this study are listed below.

- Course 1
- Course 2
- Course 3

The features of these three courses are provided in table 3-2. To sum up, all these three courses are the second-level undergraduate courses of the School of Education, which could lead to a degree. Course 1 is a half-credit course; both Course 2 and Course 3 are

one-credit (full-credit) courses. Both Course 1 and Course 3 are claimed to be ‘new’ courses but they have actually evolved from their predecessor courses. Course 2 is a rolling re-made course which is re-made portion by portion while the course is still on offer for a couple of years with an aim to become a completely new course in the end. Course 1 has recently completed the work of course development and is presented for the first time when the main fieldwork of this study is carried out. Both Course 2 and Course 3 are not presented yet and are in the early stage of course development.

[Table 3- 2] Features of the Cases/Courses (in 1993)

Case	Course 1	Course 2	Course 3
Feature			
Faculty	The School of Education	The School of Education	The School of Education
Level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Undergraduate: 2nd level Professional diploma in post-compulsory education 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Undergraduate: 2nd level 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Undergraduate: 2nd level Advanced diploma
Credit	Half credit	One (full) credit	One (full) credit
Category	‘New’ course	Rolling re-made course	‘New’ course
Course History	(This course is derived from Course 1P.)	Predecessor courses: Course 2P; Course 2YP	(This course is derived from Course 3PS.)
Course Development	Completed recently	In the early stage of course development	In the early stage of course development
Course Presentation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In the first year of presentation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not yet (The course with the first part of rolling re-made would be presented in 1995.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not yet (The course would be presented for the first time in 1996.)

In general, the decision to select these three courses was made based on the successful meeting with gatekeepers. Burgess (1984a) addressed the importance of initial contacts for obtaining access. Indeed, the initial contact in this study fuelled the main fieldwork and accelerated the study. To sum up, the features of gaining access to courses / course teams (as well as the sampling of cases) are described below.

3.1.3 Sampling within cases

- The initial contact with three course teams was not in a covert mode but with an overt approach (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992).
- The first contact with Course 1 was not initiated by the researcher, but by her supervisor. He was thus a key external influence to this study. It can be said that the first contact with Course 1 takes advantage of the personal working relationship between the researcher’s supervisor and the chairperson of the

course team since they are long-term colleagues. However, the researcher made the follow-up contacts.

- The negotiations over the access to Course 2 and to Course 3 were linked and initiated from the contact with Course 1. The course managers of these courses were crucial for gaining access to the course teams.
- These course team members did not think that this study would cause problems to their work in course teams.
- The researcher's description of this study seemed to be of interest to the course team members.
- It seemed that the sense of trust was developed between the researcher and these course team members from the beginning.
- For this study, there was no administrative procedure for gaining access. The researcher was not asked to get permissions step by step from the lower levels up to the higher levels of authorities. For instance, although the researcher started her contact with Course 1 from meeting the course team chairperson, the researcher was able to talk with other course team members without getting the permission of the chairperson. As to Course 2, the researcher's initial contact was with the course manager who gave the researcher full support. Regarding Course 3, the researcher met almost all the course team members in the mean time since their offices were located along the same corridor. It can thus be said that there was no obvious 'hierarchy of consent' (Burgess, 1984b, p.258) for the researcher to gain the access.

3.3.3 Sampling within cases

Sampling does not merely refer to the selection of cases. Sampling within cases is also needed. Hammersley and Atkinson (1995, p.45) pointed out that the sampling within cases includes the sampling of time, context and people. Regarding this study, what needed to be decided in addition to the selection of cases / course teams were the part of course development (because course development in the University usually lasts for three

years), the type of course team work (because course teams carry out various activities, such as, writing or attending meetings) and the type of course team members (because they might be non-academics or contracted workers). In the process of selecting cases / course teams (see section 3.3.2), the part of course development was in the mean time decided, which was the early stage of course development. Thus, only the following two kinds of sampling within cases are reported in this section.

- Selection of the type of course team work
- Selection of the type of course team members

Selection of the type of course team work

At the UKOU, course teams carry out different work (e.g., writing, involvement in filming the TV programmes or attending meetings) and work at different time (e.g., during official working hours or other times), in different places (e.g., meeting rooms, staff rooms or the refectory) and in different forms (e.g., private work, formal meetings or informal meetings). To select the type of course team work to be observed, the following decision was made.

- The course team meeting would be the place for collecting the observation data.

The reasons for making this decision are listed below.

- Working in course team meetings is a distinct event in course development of the UKOU. By attending a number of course team meetings, participants not only make decisions but also revise the drafts of course materials.
- Course team meetings can show how people work together as a team.
- Course team meetings are, to a certain extent, open and accessible compared with the private and informal work carried out by course team members at different time and places.

In other words, the course team meeting was selected to be observed because it is vital for the course development of the UKOU. The investigation into course team meetings can directly tackle the 'team' aspect of the research issue. And it is comparatively easier

to carry out observations in course team meetings because course team meetings are not private and informal.

Selection of the type of course team members

In section 2.5.1, it is described that the original course team of the UKOU is formed by grouping the content specialist, the educational technologist, the course manager, the editor, the media specialist and the secretary together. Addition to them, other staff members might also be involved in course team work depending on the needs. The people who work for course teams are either the staff members of the faculty/school which offers the course, the members of other working units of the University or the contracted workers. They are based either at the headquarters of the University (i.e., in Milton Keynes), in regional centres or out side of the University. They work either full-time or part-time. Thus, for carrying out interviews, there is a need to narrow down the scope of interviewees and select whom to be interviewed. In this study, in order to explore the research issue, the following decisions regarding the interviewees were made.

- The core academic (including academic-related) course team members who are also the permanent staff members of the University would be the main interviewees.
- They included the chairpersons of the course teams, the course managers of the course teams and the course authors who were the permanent academic staff of the School of Education.
- Following the development of the study, a project controller was additionally interviewed because it was realised later on while the study was carried out that her work was relevant to course development.

It can be seen that this study decided not to investigate the contracted course team members. One reason was that they were comparatively less influential to the three course teams. The other reason was that the names of contracted course team members were not fixed yet at the time of making the decision. According to the conventional

working pattern of the UKOU, the contracted course team members were invited to join the teams only when needed.

In the phase of pre-fieldwork, the exploratory work in the form of interviews is carried out, too. The pre-fieldwork interviews are reported below.

3.3.4 Exploratory work (Pre-fieldwork interviews)

In the early stage of carrying out this study, it was important to talk with people who are experienced in course team work. The purpose was to get some sense of the course teams of the UKOU. Therefore, before the main fieldwork, the exploratory work was carried out in the end of 1992 and in the beginning of 1993 by interviewing three such people (one interview with each person). These interviews lasted for five hours. The features of the exploratory work are listed in table 3-3.

[Table 3- 3] Features of the Pre-fieldwork Interviews (the Exploratory Work)

Features of the Pre-fieldwork Interviews (the Exploratory Work)		
3 interviews	3 interviewees (They are the academic staff of the UKOU, who are not the course team members of the three course teams but are experienced in course team work.)	[Total]: 5 hours

These three interviewees were recommended by the researcher’s supervisor. He believed that they could show their insight into the UKOU’s course teams / course team work. Among these interviewees, two were the senior academic staff of the Institute of Educational Technology, who were deeply involved in course development in the early days of the University. The third was an academic who played a key role in a certificate course offered by the School of Education.

Generally speaking, these three pre-fieldwork interviews stimulated the following inspirations.

- It seems that the course development in the UKOU has come across various practical issues.
- It seems that the course team of the UKOU faces various difficulties although the University has structured the work of course development from a number of perspectives.
- It seems that some similarities exist between the real course development of the UKOU and that of other distance teaching universities. Hence, the researcher's prior experiences in Taiwan might be helpful, to certain extent, to this study.

These inspirations were helpful to take directions for the future. With them, the main fieldwork was planned and carried out.

In summary, section 3.3 describes the work in the phase of pre-fieldwork. The first report regards the access to the UK and to the UKOU. The section afterwards focuses on gaining the access to course teams, which links with the sampling of cases (i.e., the selection of courses / course teams). A crucial decision on this was to investigate the undergraduate courses in the School of Education. Three undergraduate courses offered by the School were selected through contacting gatekeepers, which were Course 1, Course 2 and Course 3. Among them, Course 1 had completed the work of course development and just started its first year of presentation; both Course 2 and Course 3 were in the early stage of course development. Furthermore, the sampling within cases was carried out. In this study, the course team meetings were selected for observations. The core academic (including academic-related) course team members of these three course teams were selected as the main interviewees, including the chairpersons, the course managers and the course authors who were the permanent academic staff of School of Education. A project controller was included in the list of interviewees as well because it was understood later during the course of carrying out the study that her work was relevant to course development.

Before the main fieldwork, the exploratory work was carried out. This included interviewing three academic staff members who were not the course team members but were experienced in course team work of the University. The total duration of the

interviews was five hours. The inspirations stimulated by the exploratory work triggered the main fieldwork.

The next section reports the main work in the phase of fieldwork.

3.4 Fieldwork

The fieldwork was a phase in which a number of activities were carried out simultaneously. For instance, while the data were being collected, the study kept taking shape. Data were also analysed, to some extent. The validity of the study was considered as well. The work which is mainly reported in this section is data collection. For collecting data, this study used the following three methods: observations, interviews and the collection of documents.

The data collection began by interviewing the course team members of Course 1 in spring 1993. Then participating in the course team meetings of Course 2 and of Course 3 took place in the middle of the year. Soon, interviewing of the course team members of Course 2 and of Course 3 began as well. The researcher stopped carrying out observations in the beginning of 1994 by following the advice of her supervisor because according to him the researcher ought to stop collecting data at that time. Interviews were also ended in the spring of 1994. With respect to the collection of documents, it was carried out during the whole course of doing the research.

This section which reports the main fieldwork is divided into the following four parts.

- Observations
- Interviews
- Collection of documents
- Validity of the study

3.4.1 Observations

The use of observations has strengths and weaknesses. Patton (1990, p.203) pointed out the following six advantages of doing observations. (1) The researcher can get a better understanding of the context within which the researched acts and is operated. (2) The first-hand experience permits the researcher to be open, discovery-oriented and inductive in approach. (3) The researcher can see things that might be routine for the researched. (4) The researcher can see things which the researched may be unwilling to talk about in an interview. (5) The observation allows the researcher to exceed the selective perception of the researched. (6) Getting close to the researched gives the researcher an opportunity of generating reflections that are the resource to aid in understanding and interpreting the researched. Not only having advantages, the observation method receives criticisms as well, notably in respect of its validity (Cohen & Manion, 1989, p.129) -- it is questioned that the result of observation-based research is difficult to apply to other situations. (In this study, the validity of observations is taken into account which is discussed in section 3.4.4.) With the understanding of the merits and limitations of observations, it was decided that this study would adopt the method of observations.

In this section, the report on carrying out observations is divided into the following six parts.

- Authorisations for the observations and for audio-recording in the observations
- The observed (the course team meetings)
- Type of the observations
- First impressions (the strangeness and familiarity)
- Fieldnotes
- Features of observation data

Authorisations for the observations and for audio-recording during observations

In this study, the permissions were sought to attend and observe course team meetings and to record the conversations in meetings by using an audio recorder. This implies that

the 'overt observations' were carried out in this study. The researcher believed that there was no way to conceal the researcher's real intention in the meeting rooms which had no observation mirror. Moreover, with ethical reasons, the covert observations were ruled out.

The approvals were firstly sought from the course team chairpersons through the course managers. In addition to giving the researcher their own approvals, the course team chairpersons asked the researcher to personally get permissions from other participants of course team meetings as well. The researcher therefore talked with all the participants individually before her first attendance at course team meeting. She told them why she was in the meeting and asked them if they would object to her attendance.

As to getting permission to audio-record the talk in course team meetings, this issue was not raised before the researcher's first attendance at course team meeting. But with the following two reasons the permission was postponed to be sought till the researcher had actually involved in course team meetings. (1) It might be overwhelming for course team members if the researcher asked for the permission at her first meeting. It was decided that the audio-recording in course team meetings should wait until after the researcher had built her relationship with the participants of meetings. (2) The chance of successfully getting the permission might be bigger if the enquiry was raised later, rather than earlier in the first encounter with the participants of meetings.

The time for raising the request for audio-recording in the course team meeting of Course 2 however, came very quickly. After her first meeting with the team, the researcher felt that it might be all right to pose this kind of request to this course team soon in next meeting. The researcher then received the permission in her second meeting with the course team of Course 2 because the participants saw no problem with the request. An exception was that one editor was a little bit reluctant to say yes to the researcher, and asked the researcher if it would be possible for him to know the final result of the study. In the case of Course 3, the researcher felt that this team was comparatively more structured and formal. A friendly distance existed between the researcher and them. The researcher thus did not think that it was a good idea to raise this type of issue at the early

stage although she was keen to do so. An opportunity came when a female participant -- who was in several course team meetings with the researcher -- asked the researcher if she could grasp and remember what had happened in course team meetings without audio-recording. The researcher thus thought this might be an appropriate time to seek the permission for audio-recording. The response from the course team chairperson was positive. The researcher afterwards also obtained the permission from all the participants of the meeting. It was in her fourth meeting with Course 3.

The Observed (the course team meetings)

The observed in this study was the course team meetings. The meetings commonly started with checking and amending the meeting minutes of the last course team meeting. Relevant matters arising were discussed together. Afterwards, the chairperson of the meeting asked people to report in turn on any work progress made since the previous meeting. Regarding the discussions on the agenda items listed in meeting agendas, the meeting chairperson usually first asked every participant to express their views and afterwards stimulated discussions among participants. Final decisions were not a requirement of a meeting. Many issues were often concluded after further discussions in the next meeting or following informal talks after the meeting. The last activity in course team meetings was usually the scheduling of next meeting.

This study observed the meetings of two course teams during the same period. Observing two course teams simultaneously had advantages and disadvantages. An advantage was that the researcher could collect a considerable amount of data in a short period of time. Also, the researcher could reach the density of the data and the *theoretical saturation* of analysis comparatively quickly (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1990) while carrying out the data analysis and data collection during the same period. Moreover, the data from different sources could generate comparisons, which was helpful for generating theory. Different sources of data also enhanced the validity of the study. However, the tight working pattern reduced the time available for developing fieldnotes. This time pattern also meant that the process of carrying out the study was stressful.

The course team meetings of Course 2 and of Course 3 were held roughly every two weeks. They had a break when the University closed for Christmas and Easter holidays. There were also no meetings during the summer. When the discussion papers were not properly prepared, course team meetings were postponed. Course team meetings of Course 2 and of Course 3 were normally chaired by respective course team chairperson. In the event of the course team chairperson not being available, one of course team members would be asked to take over the position as chairperson for that particular meeting. Typically, course team meetings lasted about three hours. Sometimes the meeting took longer than that. The meeting agenda/minute of a course team meeting was usually distributed to the participants of meeting before/after the meeting. Some discussion papers -- e.g., the drafted outline of the course and the written comments -- were also given to participants. These were either attached with the meeting agenda before meeting or distributed in the meeting.

Regarding the phase of course construction while the observations were carried out, both Course 2 and Course 3 were in the early stages of course development. In the case of Course 2, the researcher started from the ninth meeting; and the last one to be attended was the eighteenth. For Course 3, the researcher observed from the thirteenth to the twentieth course team meeting. The main concern for these course team meetings was the structure of the courses.

With respect to the venue of the course team meetings, the course team meetings were held either in a meeting room or in the office of a course team member. In a meeting room, people sat in a circle around tables. The researcher was invited and allowed to sit with them. Therefore, the people who sat beside the researcher were the other participants except the course team chairperson. The researcher had space to write and to put her audio-recorder, cassettes and relevant printed materials on the table. A few meetings were alternatively held in an office, which was small, having room only for two sets of office facilities for two people. Therefore, it was only possible to put in enough chairs for every participant and to circle the chairs together away from the desks at these meetings. The researcher could not but put the audio-recorder on top of her lap, hold the

printed materials and do some writing on the top of the audio-recorder at the same time. This situation interfered with recording. The noise from moving sheets of paper was recorded in tapes from time to time. Although some important discussions occurred in this staff room, the researcher was unable to get a good quality recordings.

Type of the observations

There are various ways to carry out observations. Observations can be conducted by collecting the quantitative data. The American tradition with Flanders's interaction analysis was criticised by Delamont and Hamilton (1976) who suggested an alternative approach in Britain with anthropological observation. This British trend can be seen from Stubbs's (1976) study which investigated the teacher-talk in classroom by collecting the tape-recorded dialogue and the observational notes. In this study, the common British way to carry out observations was followed and the focus was participant observation.

Friedrichs and Lüdtke (1975, p.5) identified four types of observations, namely, (1) the controlled (standardised) participant observation, (2) the controlled (standardised) non-participant observation, (3) the uncontrolled (un-standardised) participant observation and (4) uncontrolled (un-standardised) non-participant observation. These four types can be displayed in a matrix that is made up by two axes -- the way the researcher observes and the extent the researcher participates in the observed -- and consists of four cells. In other words, dichotomy is used in this categorisation. In practice however, it is sometimes difficult to choose out of these four types to categorise an observation; and every social researcher is in a way a participant observer (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995, p.1). In this study, the researcher did participate in the meeting to the extent that she was present at the meeting but did not participate in any discussion. At meetings, the researcher simply took notes, operated her audio-recorder whilst remaining silent herself. Maintaining silence proved a special experience. When each participant was asked to say something in turn, the sequence of talking jumped from the person who sat beside the researcher to the one who was adjacent to the researcher on the other side. Although they

located the researcher within their seat circle, they treated the researcher as if she did not exist when they were talking.

Another categorisation suggested by Gold (referred by Burgess, 1984a, p.80) and Junker (referred by Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995, p.104) includes the following four types of observation: (1) complete participant, (2) participant as observer, (3) observer as participant and (4) complete observer. Although this typology only considers the role of observer, all the observations can be located in the continuum of the typology from the complete involvement in the observed to the absolute detachment from the observed. Patton (1990, p.206) suggested that there are variations within the range of these two extremes. Burgess (1984a, p.85) also highlighted the flow of role making. He even reported his own experience of changing roles in the whole course of carrying out a project. Regarding this study, observations did not stick firmly on one particular kind of observation through the whole course. Starting from 'observer as participant' and staying in this role most of time, the researcher -- with her foreign eyes and with her preconception about the UKOU's course teams -- however gradually moved towards being a 'participant as observer'. In time, the researcher became aware that she was apt to be both anxious and relaxed with course teams. Therefore, the researcher started to consider her closeness with the course teams. As a matter of fact, this was a two-way relationship because some course team members mentioned that maybe the researcher could become one of the students for 'developmental testing' and that maybe the researcher could help them develop the international link. Although this did not happen in the end, the fear of losing objectivity and increasing subjectivity gradually grew. In other words, the researcher faced the challenge, pointed out by Patton (1990, p.207), of properly combining participation and observation in order to be capable of understanding the course teams as an insider while describing them for the view point of outsiders.

Spradley (1980, p.34) proposed the other categorisation of observations, which includes the following three types: (1) the descriptive observation, (2) the focused observation and (3) the selective observation. These represent the observations in different stages of the whole course of carrying out a research project. The typology can be viewed as a funnel,

from 'descriptive observations', through 'focused observations' to 'selective observations'. In this study, 'descriptive observations' were carried out at the beginning of attending course team meetings by raising a general question -- 'what is going on here?' -- without any particular query in mind. In other words, the researcher tried to understand as much as possible. After organising her first impressions, the researcher found her focus and decided to look at the work of course teams (not, for instance, the feelings of course team members). 'Focused observations' thus started to be processed. Following the development of categories in fieldnotes, 'selective observations' were even engaged. It can thus be said that the observations in this study became increasingly manageable by carrying out these three types of observation.

First impressions (the strangeness and familiarity)

Burgess (1984a, p.25) pointed out that handling the familiar and the strange is the task for a field researcher. Both the senses of strangeness and familiarity can be obtained when carrying out a single work. A number of situations within the same setting comprises both the familiar and the strange. Indeed, in this study, these two contradictory feelings did emerge. They related to the researcher's prior education and work experiences. This echoed Ball's (1984) reflection -- the researcher's educational and professional backgrounds are important since they are the starting points of the PhD study.

In this study, the researcher got a fresh vision of seeing things as both a foreigner and a practitioner from another distance teaching university. Schutz (referred by Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995, p.8) pointed out that the stranger achieved a certain objectivity which is normally unavailable to insiders of the culture. Regarding this study, the researcher's background did confer this advantage. Additionally, the researcher could develop empathy with the UKOU in certain ways since she came from another distance teaching university. Although quite a few things were odd to the researcher, she could share some ideas with UKOU staff. The first impressions were gained from the first days in course team meetings, which is reported below.

Henslin (1990, p.58) mentioned that the initiation into another world might give a researcher a reality shock. Schatzman and Strauss (1973, p.53) pointed out the importance of this kind of initial sensitivities which are the valued resource and tool for discovery. Indeed, the reality of course team meetings surprised the researcher. This first impressions stimulated the researcher to alter her existing preconceptions and to re-shape the framework of the study. Before sitting in on course team meetings, the researcher had a number of preconceptions. It was presumed that the meeting would be very academic and full of technical terms from the particular subject since the course team meeting was about a course. In the early stages, it was understood from the literature that people who attended course team meetings were from different places and worked on different aspects, such as editors, BBC staff, the course manager and so on. The presumptions were that these people would only participate in the discussions that were related to their specific work. The researcher also believed that people in the meeting would work effectively since the course team meeting was the place where people got together to deal with the matter of the course. Furthermore, the course team of the UKOU was treated as an ideal model that was adopted by a range of other distance teaching institutions in the globe. However, the researcher's first impressions from her first course team meetings were quite different from what she had kept in mind. The discussions in course team meetings were not very academic all the time. The participants discussed almost everything -- sometimes everything except the content of the course. They were willing to talk. They even got involved in the discussions not directly related to their work.

It can be said that the researcher's first course team meetings prompted a number of questions. For instance, why were there so many things that needed to be talked about? Why did people in course team meetings talk about things beyond the content of the course? Why did people in the course team meetings like to talk? Why did course team meetings last for such a long time? These forced the researcher to reflect on her prior knowledge and experiences. Different ideas consequently emerged. The refined research plan which incorporated new thinking therefore moved into a new territory.

Fieldnotes

Regarding the type of fieldnotes, Spradley (1980, p.69) suggested the following four kinds, i.e., the 'condensed account', the 'expanded account', the 'fieldwork journal' and the 'analysis and interpretation notes'. Burgess (1984a, p.167) distinguished fieldnotes into 'substantive fieldnotes', 'methodological notes', 'analytic notes' and 'indexing fieldnotes'. These two categorisations imply that the fieldnotes are taken either in the observation setting or after observations.

In this study, fieldnotes were taken in the observation setting. A self-designed form was used for taking fieldnotes. The cover page of the form mainly comprised a name-list of likely participants and their roles in the team. A part of the sheet was empty and available for drawing how the participants exactly sat in the room. Basically, this form was designed as a checklist. Thus, the researcher was able to make tick box entries very quickly. However, there was also some space for jotting down certain important features of the discussions such as the important words and key sentences. Time were recorded in the form, too.

This form was continually up-dated because the researcher used this form to develop the analysis categories as the primary data analysis. The categories were either confirmed or altered after each course team meeting. It can be said that this is a kind of '*theoretical sampling*' (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

'Theoretical sampling is the process of data collection for generating theory whereby the analyst jointly collects, codes, and analyses his data and decides what data to collect next and where to find them, in order to develop his theory as it emerges.' (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p.45)

By using the form, both the data collection and the primary data analysis were carried out together. While listening what participants had said in course team meetings and jotting down the key words, the researcher simultaneously put ticks in a set of categories which she continuously developed and adjusted based on the fieldwork. In other words, the '*constant comparative analysis*' was carried out while the observation data were collected at course team meetings. By this way, the researcher's thinking was constructed

and the temporary theory was developed. Under the circumstances, both the data collection and the primary data analysis became an on-going procedure.

In addition to the form, the researcher recalled her day-to-day life in her diary. It was written after she left the context of course team meetings. It can be said that the researcher's diary became a kind of fieldnotes taken after observations.

Features of the observation data

The researcher attended the course team meeting of Course 2 for the first time in June 1993 and for Course 3 in July 1993. From mid July 1993 to mid September 1993, both course teams had a summer break. The work of observations stopped in the beginning of 1994. In other words, the researcher observed course team meetings over a six-month period. Most of the course team meetings were audio-recorded. The features of the observation data (including the number of observed meetings and the number of available audio-recorded observation data) are listed in table 3-4.

[Table 3- 4] Features of the Observation Data

The observed Feature	Course Team Meetings of Course 2	Course Team Meetings of Course 3
Number of Observed Meetings	Meeting numbers: 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 16, 17, 18	Meeting numbers: 13, 14, 17, 18, 19, 20
	[Total]: 8 meetings 24 hours	[Total]: 6 meetings 18 hours
	[Grand Total]: 14 meetings 42 hours	
Number of Available Audio-recorded Observation Data	Meeting numbers: 10, 11, 12, 13, 16, 17, 18	Meeting numbers: 18, 19, 20
	[Total]: 7 meetings 15 hours	[Total]: 3 meetings 8.25 hours
	[Grand Total]: 10 meetings 23.25 hours	

The above table shows that eight course team meetings of Course 2 as well as six course team meetings of Course 3 were observed. Altogether, observations were carried out in 14 course team meetings from two course teams. Each course team meeting lasted about three hours. In total, 42 hours of course team meetings were observed over a six-month period. Regarding the available audio-recorded data collected from the observations,

seven course team meetings of Course 2 as well as three course team meetings of Course 3 were audio-recorded. In other words, the audio-recorded observation data were produced from ten course team meetings. Within them, certain course team meetings were not recorded properly due to technical reasons; and a few parts of course team meetings -- e.g., the trivial talk in the end of a meeting -- were not recorded purposely because they were hardly relevant to this study. Therefore, the whole length of available audio-recorded observation data became a little bit more than 23 hours.

3.4.2 Interviews

This study used the method of interviews to collect data, too. Interviews, as a method of data collection, has strengths and weaknesses. One of its advantages is that it can generate the '*insider accounts*' that provide the information about the phenomena to which they refer (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995, pp.124-125). From the insider accounts, those who produce them can be understood. Notwithstanding, the interview method is weakened by the feature of retrospection -- interviewees recall certain things from memory when they are interviewed. Since what interviewees say might vary in different occasions, the reliability of interviews is questioned (Cohen & Manion, 1989, p.308). Moreover, the 'artificiality' of the formal interview might make the response different from the one in 'normal' events in the setting. Although the interview method has these disadvantages, the perspectives elicited in interviews may still have the ability to illuminate the interviewee's behaviour (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995, p.140).

Therefore, in this study, it was decided that interviews would be carried out for probing the interviewee's experiences and the meanings that they made of those experiences (Seidman, 1991, p.3); and for compensating the shortcomings of interviews, this study would also carry out observations since the observation data may show the active, real world of course team work.

This section which regards interviews carried out in the phase of fieldwork is divided into the following three parts.

- Ways to carry out the interviews
- Type of the interviews
- Features of the interview data collected in the phase of fieldwork

Ways to carry out the interviews

In the phase of fieldwork, almost all the interviews were carried out with the course team members of three course teams (i.e., Course 1, Course 2 and Course 3) who were the permanent academic (and academic-related) staff. An exceptional interviewee was the editor of Course 3, who was experienced in playing the role as a project controller. This interview was carried out because it was realised later on during the process of carrying out the study that the work of project controller was relevant to course development.

All interviews were arranged by face-to-face contact except one that was via a telephone call since this interviewee was not available on campus. At the time of making the appointment, the researcher let the course team member choose when and where to have the interview. The permission to audio-record the interview was in the mean time asked and obtained.

Most interviews were carried out either in the offices of interviewees or in quiet rooms that were selected by interviewees and located on campus of the headquarters of the UKOU. Both kinds of setting provided interviewees with a familiar, quiet and relaxing environment. Additionally, two talks were recorded in the refectory on campus -- one in the early morning, the other in lunch time. The early morning interview was suggested by the interviewee. The decision to carry out an interview during the lunch time was made by chance. This was an interview carried out in a 'normal' environment. It happened when the researcher and her friend came across a course team member in the refectory of the UKOU. The conversation started from the recent course team meeting -- its fresh impression was still in our minds. Since the course team member was willing to talk and did not object to speaking into a tape recorder, a recording machine was quickly fetched and the interview was audio-recorded. Although the refectory was comparatively noisy, there was no problem in terms of the quality of recording because a clip-on microphone

was fixed close to interviewee's mouth. Finally, one interview was specially arranged in the interviewee's home near London, as she was on her maternity leave. The recording quality of this interview was acceptable because only she and the researcher were in her home at that time.

Regarding the question raised in the interviews, most of the interviews were carried out based on an *interview outline*, which consisted of the following issues.

- The perception of his/her responsibility in his/her course team
- The reasons why he/she has gained the responsibility
- The way to carry out his/her work in his/her course team
- The perception of his/her team meetings
- The formation of his/her courses
- The view on working together as a team

All the above-mentioned issues were covered in each interview. But the actual questions raised were in different forms according to the background of interviewees. There was no fixed sequence of raising questions.

There were a few tactics for getting what the researcher needed from interviews.

Interviewees were led to talk about firstly their own work and next their course teams.

Following the questions, interviewees provided information from the objective descriptions of their work and their teams to their subjective views. Most of the time, the researcher gave the encouraging non-verbal responses with key words of the talk jotted down. Basically, the researcher followed interviewees' thoughts and let them say what they wanted to say. The researcher also asked for further explanations when she did not understand. To get the most from an interview, the researcher tried to be an active listener and re-shaped the interview continuously according to what the researcher had heard. However, the researcher sometimes controlled the direction of the interview and briefly interjected. In interviews, the researcher's perceptions of course team meetings were shared with interviewees for bringing out their own views. It seems that the researcher's dual role (i.e., as a staff from another distance teaching university and also a research student of the UKOU) intrigued the interviewees. Sometimes, the researcher

took the practice of the NOU in Taiwan as an example to enable interviewees to make comparisons and to talk more about their own situations. Occasionally, the researcher assumed the demeanour of a student since she was aware that some interviewees were keen to assume a tutor role. Basically, the interviewees were used to talking. They were basically eloquent. Therefore, the researcher sometimes shifted the flow of their talk in order to manage the time and to ask some other questions that the researcher had planned beforehand.

Type of the interviews

There are various ways to categorise the types of interview. For instance, Powney and Watts (1987) suggested 'respondent interviews' and 'informant interviews'. Taylor and Bogdan (1984) addressed 'structured interviewing' and 'in-depth interviewing' (i.e., qualitative interviewing). Cohen and Manion's (1989) category comprises the 'structured interview', the 'unstructured interview', the 'non-directive interview' and the 'focused interview'. In Patton's (1990, p.280) grouping, it includes the 'informal conversational interview', the 'general interview guide approach' and the 'standardised open-ended interview'. These categorisations show that there are three dimensions of categorising interviews, namely, people, dialogue and the extent the dialogue is controlled.

In general, the semi-structured interviews were carried out in this study. But, by taking the view of continuum (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992, p.97), the interviews in this study swung in the continuums from the unstructured interview to the structured interview, from the in-depth interview to the surface interview, from the non-directive interview to the directive interview and from the interviewee-based interview to the interviewer-centred interview. Thus, the 'reflexive interviews' (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995, p.152) can also be used to describe the interviews carried out in this study.

Features of the interview data collected in the phase of fieldwork

The interviewees in the phase of fieldwork were from three course teams. Almost all of them were the permanent academic (and academic-related) staff of the University playing the roles in the course teams as the course team chairpersons, the course managers and the course authors. An editor of a course team who was experienced in the work of project controller was also interviewed. The features of the interview data collected in the phase of fieldwork (including the number of interviews, the number of interviewees and the number of core course team members who are the permanent staff of the University) are listed in table 3-5.

[Table 3- 5] Features of the Interview Data Collected in the Phase of Fieldwork

Team	The Course Team of Course 1	The Course Team of Course 2	The Course Team of Course 3
Feature			
Number of Interviews	• Chairperson: 1 • Course manager: 1 • Course author: 4	• Chairperson: 2 • Course manager: 2 • Course author: 3	• Chairperson: 1 • Course manager: 1 • Course author: 1 • Project controller: 1
	[Total]: 6 interviews	[Total]: 7 interviews	[Total]: 4 interviews
	[Grand Total]: 17 interviews		
Number of Interviewees	• Chairperson: 1 • Course manager: 1 • Course author: 3	• Chairperson: 1 • Course manager: 1 • Course author: 2	• Chairperson: 1 • Course manager: 1 • Course author: 1 • Project controller: 1
	[Total]: 5 interviewees	[Total]: 4 interviewees	[Total]: 4 interviewees
	[Grand Total]: 13 interviewees		
Number of Core Course Team Members Who Are the Permanent Staff	• Chairperson: 1 • Course manager: 1 • Course author: 3	• Chairperson: 1 • Course manager: 1 • Course author: 4	• Chairperson: 1 • Course manager: 1 • Course author: 3
	[Total]: 5 people	[Total]: 6 people	[Total]: 5 people
	[Grand Total]: 16 people		
Number of Available Audio-recorded interview data	[Total]: 6 interviews 5 interviewees 9 hours	[Total]: 7 interviews 4 interviewees 7.5 hours	[Total]: 4 interviews 4 interviewees 5.25 hours
	[Grand Total]: 17 interviews 13 interviewees 21.75 hours		

The above table shows that six interviews were undertaken with five course team members of Course 1, who were the permanent staff of the University. Seven interviews were carried out with four core course team members of Course 2. Four interviews were conducted with four interviewees who work for Course 3. Altogether, 17 interviews with

13 interviewees in three course teams were undertaken. (An academic who was the member of two course teams was counted as two interviewees.) The interviews which were carried out twice to the same people were due to either the un-finished previous talk, the need to be interviewed again or the availability to have a talk again. The core course team members who were the permanent staff but were not interviewed were the people who were either not available for interviews or not willing to be interviewed. All the interviews were audio-recorded. The whole interview data lasted for nearly 22 hours.

3.4.3 Collection of documents

A number of documents were collected in this study, which are listed below.

- Agendas/minutes of course team meetings
- Related course materials
- Memos produced by course teams
- UCA forms (see section 4.5.2)
- Internal documents of the School
- The 'Courses Information Bulletin' of the UKOU (Open University, 1992a)
- The 'Production Handbook for Open University Courses and Packs' (Open University, 1992d)
- Reports of the vice-chancellor
- Issues of internal newspapers of the UKOU (i.e., 'Open House' and 'Sesame')
- Relevant internal research papers produced by the staffs of the UKOU
- Official leaflets for publicity produced by the UKOU

These documents were collected through the course team chairpersons, the course managers, the course authors, the secretaries, the administrative staff, the researcher's supervisors and the researcher herself. Among them, some were collected on an individual basis; some were distributed directly to the researcher because the course teams of Course 2 and Course 3 already put the researcher's name on their mailing lists.

It was realised in the process of collecting documents that documents were not kept in a standardised way. For example, some minutes of course team meetings were not numbered. The floppy disks which contained the meeting minutes were not kept. These signified the difference between the practitioner's work and the needs of a research. Since the documents were the 'unsolicited documents' (Burgess, 1984a, p.124) which were produced without the study in mind, the researcher had to try to make use of what was available from them. Nevertheless, this side issue did not make a tremendous impact on the study; and the documents could still be used to ascertain the features of the course team approach.

Among the above documents, the meeting minutes were worth giving further considerations. They were useful for tracing the process of developing the courses. Also, they were very handy because they were already produced. Since they could provide the rough picture of the meetings in a short time, they became the supplementary sources to the observation data. Nevertheless, some caveats came alongside the above strengths. Firstly, there was a distance between the meeting minutes and the reality of the meetings. This was because what was put inside of the meeting minutes was selective (being either the decisions made at the meetings or the important points raised at the meetings); a huge amount of details was thus inevitably omitted from the meeting minutes. Secondly, this kind of selection tended to represent the views of the course manager and the course team chairperson who drafted and proved the meeting minutes. The reality of the meetings was perceived and deducted by them. Their own particular reasons for doing it were different from the research purpose. Accordingly, the meeting minutes could not be completely relied on for getting the real picture of the meetings.

3.4.4 Validity of the study

There are two types of validity: internal validity, and external validity. '*Internal validity*' regards accuracy. It can be judged by the likelihood of error in a research. '*External*

validity' regards transferability. It considers if the conclusions of a research can be applied to other cases.

In this study, the technique of *triangulation* was applied to gain *the internal validity*. The technique of triangulation is developed based on the fact that no research method is perfect and that weaknesses always come alongside strengths. It was suggested that the use of multiple strategies in a field research -- i.e., to employ various methods, data, investigators and theories together -- can overcome the disadvantages of using single one.

Denzin (1978, pp.294-304) identified four major types of triangulation, namely, 'data triangulation' (i.e., different sources of data), 'investigator triangulation' (i.e., more than one person examining the same situation), 'theory triangulation' (i.e., using alternative or competing theories in a situation) and 'methodological triangulation' (i.e., employing different methods). In other words, triangulation can be applied to methods, data, investigators and theories. Denzin further suggested the following three types of triangulation under the umbrella term of 'data triangulation'. 'Time triangulation' highlights the consideration of the influence of time by using cross-sectional and longitudinal research designs. 'Space triangulation' refers to a kind of comparative study. 'Person triangulation' means the analyses in the aggregate level (i.e., individuals), the interactive level (i.e., several interacting people) and the collective level (e.g., an organisation). Regarding the umbrella term of 'methodological triangulation', Denzin suggested the following two types under it. 'Within-method triangulation' means that the same method is used on different occasions. 'Between-method triangulation' is that different methods are used in relation to the same object of study. Therefore, there are altogether seven types of triangulation (see table 3-6).

[Table 3- 6] Types of Triangulation

Types of Triangulation	
• Data triangulation:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – ‘time triangulation’ – ‘space triangulation’ – ‘person triangulation’
• Investigator triangulation	
• Theory triangulation	
• Methodological triangulation:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – ‘within-method triangulation’ – ‘between-method triangulation’

Based on: Denzin, N. K. (1978)

In this study, the internal validity would be examined by applying both ‘data triangulation’ and ‘methodological triangulation’. Table 3-7 explains the application of ‘data triangulation’ and ‘methodological triangulation’ to this study.

[Table 3- 7] Application of ‘Data Triangulation’ and ‘Methodological Triangulation’ to This Study

Data Source	The Course Team of Course 1	The Course Team of Course 2	The Course Team of Course 3
Interviews	√	√	√
Observations	--	√	√
Document Collection	√	√	√

Regarding the application of ‘data triangulation’ to this study, since this study investigated three course teams, the same situations in different course teams would be assessed by carrying out ‘space triangulation’. With respect to the application of ‘methodological triangulation’ to this study, since three methods -- i.e., interviews, observations and document collection -- were used to collect data in this study, for examining whether data which were collected by using different methods contained the same information, ‘between-method triangulation’ would be carried out.

Moreover, this study considered the possible sources of error in observations. By self-assessment, it was suggested that the research process itself had little influence on what was observed and that the researcher had little impact on the course team meetings. This was because the researcher was seemed to be viewed by academic course team members as the one in relatively low status (i.e., as a student of the UKOU, and as a practitioner

from a small and relatively new open university who wants to learn something from them). This would reduce academic course team members' self-protection from the researcher and enable them to act naturally.

The effect of audio-recording in observations was also taken into account. With the following five awareness, it was suggested that there was no major negative impact resulting from audio-recording the course team meetings.

- Course team meetings were official meetings, in which people normally spoke formally. The participants of meetings presented their work-progress, arguments, requirements and criticisms in meetings. Therefore, participants might not think that audio-recording was problematic. Once, when the researcher asked for permission to do audio-recording, a participant said that it was very welcome since nobody could later have an excuse for not remembering points made at the meeting. In this case, audio-recording was treated by him as the proof of what he had said at the meeting and would have a real function to the team. This happened again when a team had discussed the work of a member who did not turn up at that meeting. It suddenly occurred to a participant that the researcher's audio-recording might be helpful to the team in that they could copy the discussion on the tape to the absent member. Although the team did not do it in the end, recording gave the participants of meetings a certain hope.
- The convention was that the important parts of discussion in a meeting were written down in the minute of the meeting and distributed to every participant. This meant that the discussions in course team meetings were already selectively kept in a written form. The recording by an audio-recording machine was thus not a big change for participants in course team meetings. Speakers in meetings would not change what they wanted to say simply because of the presence of an audio-recording machine.
- In course team meetings, participants commonly forgot the existence of the audio-recording machine when they engaged in discussions. Thus, the researcher felt that there was no difference to course team members whether

there was an audio-recording machine or not, and whether the researcher presented. Not only did the researcher have this kind of perception, but also some course team members had similar perception. For example, one course team member told the researcher one day that the flow of discussions in the meetings were similar even if the researcher was absent.

- The researcher did not think that people would change their viewpoints in a meeting simply because of audio-recording. Every meeting had an agenda and there were aims to be achieved. People in the meetings needed to talk in order to exchange ideas and try to make decisions. Hence, to show their thinking, to present their work and to listen to other people's opinions were the most important things for the participants of a meeting. Accordingly, there was no need to sacrifice ideas just because somebody was doing audio-recording. In other words, it was not worth changing their statements and losing the opportunity of expressing what they really wanted to say. Any consequent change of viewpoint would have detracted from their input at the meeting.
- Course authors were the academics of the UKOU who were familiar with audio-recording. Once, when the researcher asked the chairperson of a course team for the permission to audio-record the meetings, the reply comprised that both recording conversation and analysing discourse were the work which the faculty academic members often undertook. Hence, they understood what the researcher would be doing in their meetings. They would not be scared like laypersons. Although it was warned that the researched with experience might shift their real intentions because they knew what the researcher wanted to do, the researcher did not think it would happen in this study in the context of course team meeting.

Although it was not believed that audio-recording had negative effects on the nature of discussions at course team meetings, it could still be felt that something did happen due to audio-recording. For example, when the tape jumped out from the slot of the audio-recording machine with a sound which indicated the completion of recording one side of the tape, this loud noise reminded the participants of the meeting that audio-recording

was carrying out. It was also felt that sometimes the participants of meetings looked at the audio-recording machine when they had nothing to do. On certain occasions, a few participants of meetings required the researcher to erase certain parts of information recorded in audio-tapes when they realised that they had made certain harsh personal criticisms of somebody who was not in the meeting. But this also showed that the participants of meetings ignored the audio-recording when they were talking. In general, these were the minor effect of audio-recording. The overall thrust of discussions in meetings was not changed as a result of it being audio-recorded. Hence, the internal validity of audio-recorded observation data should be acceptable and what were audio-recorded in course team meetings were what the participants really wanted to say.

Regarding the effect of audio-recording in interviews, it was soon realised after the first few interviews that there was no need to worry too much about this. Some interviewees deeply dropped themselves into the stream of their memory and almost ignored everything around them. Some interviewees were pleased that somebody wanted to know what they were doing. Most of the time, the interviewees did not indicate that they minded audio-recording through the whole course of interviewing. Only in situations when interviewees had unintentionally divulged some sensitive information, they asked the researcher to respect the confidentiality of those parts of interview data. These reminders were recorded on tapes.

Regarding the '*external validity*' of this study, for gaining it, the chapters of data analysis and methodology in this thesis were provide *the thick description*. In other words, the details of the data as well as the related background information were presented. These would be able to help the readers of this thesis to decide whether the conclusions of this study fit into their own particular contexts or not. Section 8.3.5 provides more discussions on the transferability of the conclusions.

3.5 Post-fieldwork phase

In the phase of post-fieldwork which started from spring 1994, most of the empirical data were handled. To consider the meaning of data and to generate the findings, more literature was reviewed. By doing these together, the study became much focused. Once the provisional arguments were established, in order to check them, a post-fieldwork interview was carried out.

In this section, the report focuses on the following three key work in the post-fieldwork phase.

- Handling data
- Post-fieldwork interview
- Writing-up

3.5.1 *Handling data*

The majority of data were handled after the fieldwork although some data were already analysed when the fieldwork was still being carrying out. Here, the report on handling data comprises the following two parts.

- Transcription of audio tapes
- Data analysis

Transcription of audio tapes

The first major work regarding handing data was to transcribe the considerable amount of audio tapes. In addition to the researcher herself, a few helpers did the work of transcribing tapes. It began by getting an agent to do the work. But without understanding the context of the study, the quality of agent's work was poor. The researcher thus changed her strategy and instead used her local contacts at the UKOU to get other helpers. Three secretaries as well as one former temporary worker -- working either in

the School of Education or in researcher's institute -- helped to transcribe tapes in a private capacity on a part-time basis.

Because different people transcribed tapes, the following considerations were taken into account. Regarding confidentiality of the data, the researcher always reminded the sensitivity of the tapes to her helpers. The helpers should have respected the confidentiality of the tapes. Secondly, mistakes might happen due to both the lack of the understanding of the context and in-sufficient language ability. To ensure reliability, the researcher checked what the helpers had transcribed and a native English-speaker checked what the researcher had transcribed. When the transcriptions were considered to be doubtful, the tapes were listened again. To boost reliability, the researcher also prepared the relevant materials for the helpers, such as the agendas/minutes of course team meetings and the name-lists of course team members. Since the helpers who worked at the UKOU knew the jargons of and the situations of the institution, it was helpful in reducing errors.

Data analysis

To carry out the data analysis, an important thing to do was to read the transcriptions again and again. The purpose was to find out their meanings and categorise them.

During the process, *the ethical issue* was taken into account and it was decided to protect the information sources. For this, both people's and courses' names were changed. A name-list which contained the real and false names was thus built up.

The use of a computer software to analyse data was considered in the time of transcribing tapes. The strengths, difficulties and procedures of using a computer software specifically designed for the analysis of qualitative data were reviewed (Fielding & Lee, 1993; LeCompte & Preissle, 1993). The 'NUDIST' programme (i.e., a software developed for the analysis of qualitative data) was learnt by attending the workshop offered by its developer from Australia and held on the UKOU's campus. However, the University did not buy this kind of software at the time of data analysis. Thus, it was decided that the

data of this study would not be analysed by using a specifically designed computer software. Various functions of 'Word' software were instead used as much as possible to help the data analysis.

The data analysis started from reading transcriptions and fieldnotes with an aim to generate categories and link them together. Because a number of analytical categories were already developed within fieldnotes at the time of collecting the observation data, they were compared with the transcriptions of observation and interview tapes. With continuous reading and thinking of the fieldnotes and transcriptions, more categories were generated and certain existing categories were modified. This was like Cocklin's (1996, p.94) study which investigated the adult students in New Zealand. According to him, the codes in his research were changed several times. In this study, certain segments of data can be interpreted from more than one perspective. For them, a few categories were used. After categories were grouped and connected together, it was apparent that certain higher-level conceptual categories were needed and thus generated. By co-operating them with other categories, the primary analysis framework of this study was structured. Certain data which could not be linked with the framework were given up. The segments of transcriptions were afterwards saved in different computer files based on higher-level categories.

Data after re-grouping showed certain meanings. However, the conclusive meanings of data were only confirmed in the time when the thesis was drafted. With an attempt to structure the thesis, what had been done in the course of carrying out the study were seriously reviewed. For presenting the data in chapters and linking data with reviewed literature, the primary analysis framework was modified. By going through this process on and on, the data analysis eventually stopped and the major meanings of the data were after all identified.

3.5.2 Post-fieldwork interview

Once the data analysis was progressing, the need to check the provisional arguments emerged. Thus, it was hoped that at least one person who was not the course team member of the three course teams could be interviewed. In the summer of 1995, a post-fieldwork interview was carried out. Its feature are listed in table 3-8.

[Table 3- 8] Features of the Post-fieldwork Interview

Features of the Post-fieldwork Interview		
1 interview	1 interviewee (An academic staff in the Faculty Z of the UKOU, who had the experience of chairing the course team of Course 4Z that was an undergraduate course)	1.5 hours

This interview was carried out with an academic staff who was the course team chairperson of Course 4Z in the Faculty Z of the UKOU, which lasted for one and a half hours. It was arranged after the researcher attended the interviewee’s seminar. In the seminar which opened to people on the campus, the interviewee presented her experience of chairing a course team of an undergraduate course in her faculty. Since the interviewee publicly addressed her views on course team work, the researcher believed that the opportunity for carrying out the post-fieldwork interview came.

From the post-fieldwork interview as well as the discussion in the seminar presented by the interviewee, the similarities between the course / course team and the three courses / course teams investigated in the main fieldwork are identified, which are listed below.

- Regarding Course 4Z, although it was not provided by the School of Education, just like the three courses, it was also under re-making from its predecessor course.
- About the course team of Course 4Z, it was mainly organised by a few academic staff who were the permanent staff of Faculty Z. This was similar to the structure of the three course teams.

The data collected from the post-fieldwork interview was used to verify the arguments generated from the main fieldwork. Generally speaking, the post-fieldwork interview showed the similar features of course team / course team work identified in the main fieldwork. Thus, the conclusions of the main fieldwork can be applied to the course team discussed in the post-fieldwork interview. The credibility of this study is thus raised by the post-fieldwork interview.

3.5.3 Writing-up

The report of this study is in the form of PhD thesis. This section delineates how the thesis writing started, the breakthrough of the writing, the key influences to the completion and how the thesis is completed.

While it is suggested that 'you cannot begin writing early enough' (Wolcott, 1990, p.20), the actual writing on thesis chapters started in the time of data analysis although certain pieces of writing were produced in the early stage. With an only vague picture of the conclusions, chapters of the thesis were drafted on a temporary basis. In the mean time, reading both data and literature was kept going on.

The breakthrough only came in the moment that suddenly the reviewed literature became meaningful to the data and the data enabled to suggest the further literature review. Since a number of ideas about how to interpret the data were in that time continuously emerged and the reading on methodology suddenly turned to be useful, there was a big push to write all these down. The thesis writing in this stage thus moved much ahead.

Hammersley and Atkinson (1995, p.239) pointed out that writing an ethnographic report is linked with reading and is responsive to data collection and data analysis. The above-mentioned personal experience of combining writing, reading and data coincided with their suggestion. Schatzman and Strauss (1973, p.132) also addressed the importance of 'late discovery' in the process of writing-up. It was true for this study that the activity of writing-up generated important insights as well as the deeper understanding of the meaning of the study.

Regarding writing-up the thesis, the following three key influences are worth being reported. Firstly, two conference papers (Chung, 1994, 1997) based on this study together with one book chapter (Chung, 1999) which was structured by applying the conclusions of this study were produced in the course of carrying out the study. The writing was helpful for generating and refining the meanings of the study. Secondly, the draft of the thesis as well as the above-mentioned writing was read by a number of scholars. Their comments contributed to the completion of the thesis. The positive feedback from key figures in the field raised the credibility of the study. Thirdly, the researcher's returning to Taiwan in 1996 provided an opportunity to examine the conclusions of the study. By comparing the practice of the NOU in Taiwan, the conceptual conclusions of the study generated from the UKOU was confirmed.

Thesis writing proved to be a long journey, which was prolonged by researcher's reporting back to her duty in Taiwan. However, with external support from various sources and the researcher's own determination, the thesis was eventually finalised.

3.6 Summary of the chapter

This chapter presented a methodological account and described how the study has been carried out. It comprised of the following four main parts: (1) the methodological paradigm, (2) the pre-fieldwork phase, (3) fieldwork and (4) the post-fieldwork phase.

Section 3.2 discusses the selection of methodological paradigm. This study started from a naturalistic inquiry and followed the approach of ethnography to an extent that was possible according to the actual situation. With the qualitative research design, this study mainly used qualitative data analysis with a small amount of quantitative data analysis.

Section 3.3 reported the key work in the phase of pre-fieldwork. For carrying out the study, the access to the UK and to the UKOU were firstly gained. The access to the course teams was connected with the sampling of cases (i.e., the selection of course teams). It was decided that this study would investigate the undergraduate courses in the

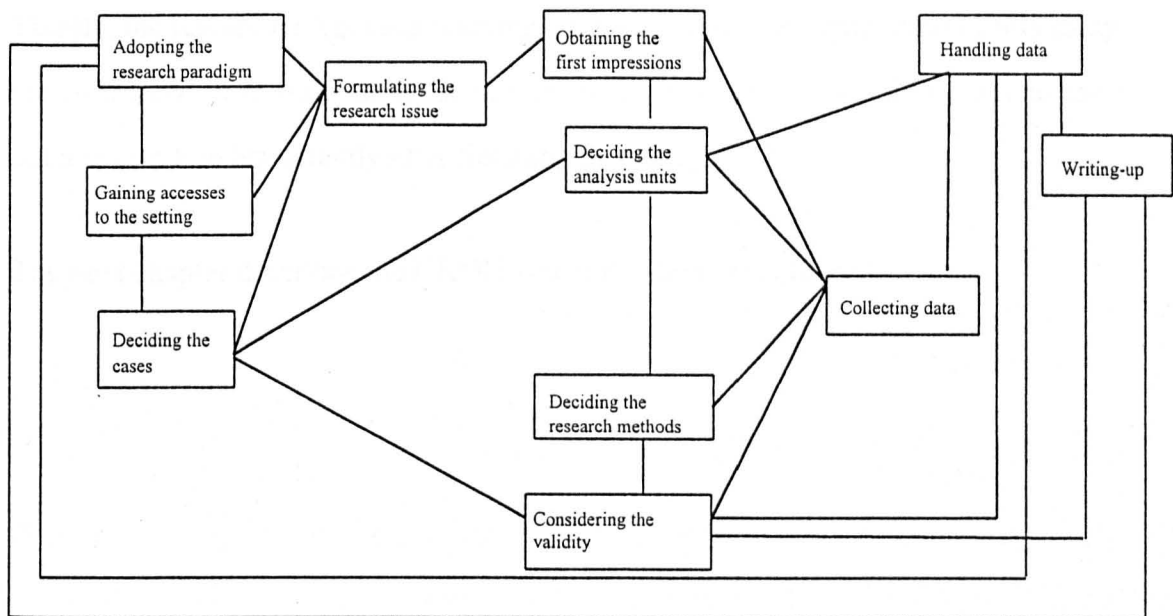
School of Education of the UKOU. By contacting gatekeepers, the access to three courses were gained. These three courses were thus selected. They were Course 1, Course 2 and Course 3. Among them, Course 1 recently completed the work of course development and just started its first year of presentation. Both Course 2 and Course 3 were in the early stage of course development. Regarding the sampling within cases, both the type of course team work and the type of course team members were considered. It was decided that the course team meeting would be the place for carrying out observations. The core academic (including academic-related) course team members who were also the permanent staff members of the University were the main interviewees. Before the main fieldwork, the exploratory work was carried out. This included three pre-fieldwork interviews, lasting five hours, with three academic staff who were not the course team members of the three course teams but were experienced in course team work of the University. These pre-fieldwork interviews inspired the design of the study.

Section 3.4 delineates the main fieldwork. This study used three methods -- observations, interviews and the collection of documents -- to collect data. Authorisation was obtained for the observations and interviews and for audio-recording when observations and interviews were carried out. The course team meetings of both Course 2 and Course 3 in the early stage of course development were observed. Generally speaking, the observations which this study carried out could be categorised as the type of 'observer as participant' but with a tendency toward the type of 'participant as observer' in the end. The feelings on the first days in course team meetings were full of strangeness as well as familiarity. These impressions helped the development of research design. In course team meetings, fieldnotes were made. After the meeting, the personal diary was written every day. To summarise the features of the observations, 14 course team meetings from two course teams were observed during the period of six months, which lasted for about 42 hours. Within them, some meetings were not recorded due to the lack of authorisation. Some parts of the meetings were not recorded properly. And some parts of the meetings were not recorded purposely. Thus, in the end, the available audio-recorded observation data were about 23 hours from ten course team meetings of two course teams. Regarding the interviews carried out in the phase of main fieldwork, generally speaking, this study

undertook the semi-structured interviews based on an interview outline. Altogether, 17 interviews with 13 interviewees in three course teams were carried out in the phase of main fieldwork. The whole interview data collected in the fieldwork phase lasted for about 22 hours. This study collected a number of documents from the course teams, the faculties and other parts of the University.

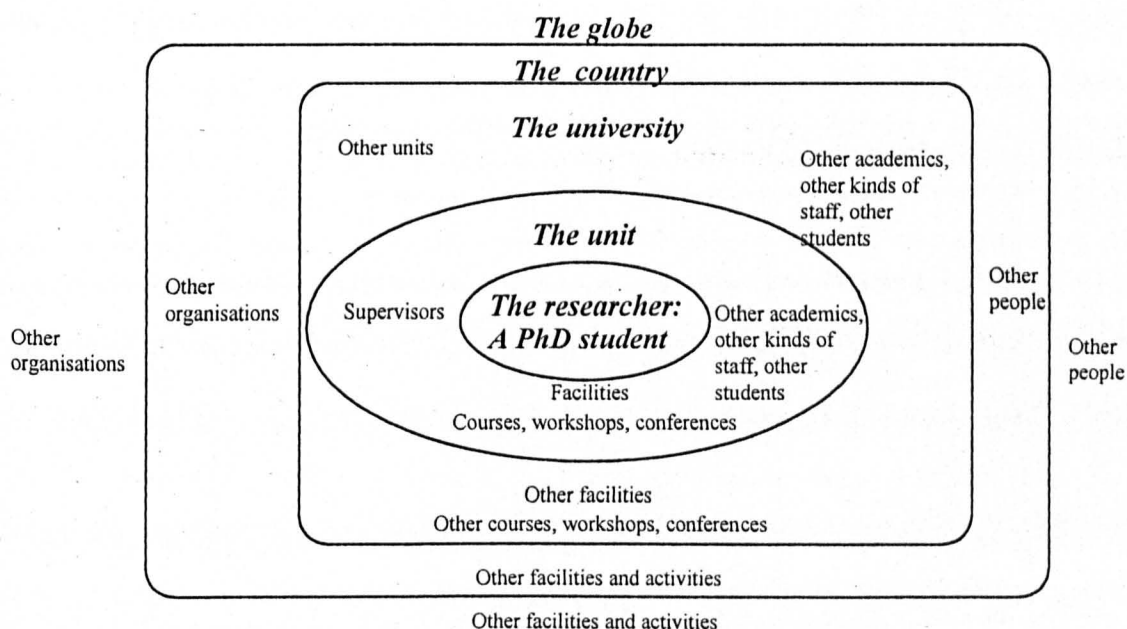
Section 3.5 reports the main work in the phase of post-fieldwork. To handle data, audio tapes were transcribed with care. Data were analysed by generating and linking the analysis categories. To protect the information sources, the ethical consideration was reflected in the thesis by changing the people's and courses' names. For verifying the provisional arguments, a post-fieldwork interview was carried with an academic staff of Faculty Z, who had the experience of chairing an undergraduate course in her faculty. In general, this one-and-a-half-hour post-fieldwork interview supported the conclusions of this study. Regarding writing up of the thesis, it proved to be a long journey. In the process, the breakthrough of the writing came in the moment when the reviewed literature suddenly became meaningful to the analysed data. The completion of the thesis was influenced by the writing of conference papers and a book chapter, by the positive feedback received from key figures in the field and by the application of the conclusions of this study to the practice of the NOU in Taiwan after the researcher went back to Taiwan for reporting back to her duty. Although there were a range of difficulties, with the external supports from various sources and the researcher's determination, this thesis was eventually finalised.

To summarise the features of this study, firstly, the activities carried out in this study can be represented as a network in which all the activities are linked together. Some of them lasted for a long period of time. The network of major activities carried out in this study is illustrated in figure 3-1.



[Figure 3- 1] Network of Major Activities Carried out in This Study

Secondly, as a PhD study, this study was carried out within contexts, e.g., the guidance from the relevant people, the availability of information, the particular structure of organisations, the limitation of time, the availability of facilities and so on. By interacting with these contexts, this study was continually shaped, re-shaped and eventually completed (see Figure 3-2).



[Figure 3- 2] Carrying out the Study within Contexts

Thirdly, the researcher has been learning by doing. Since the completion of this study means the end of learning in the doctorate level, the researcher should be able to carry out a research independently after finishing this study.

The next chapter describes the UKOU where the data are collected.

Chapter 4

The UK Open University

4.1 Introduction

The UK Open University (UKOU) was set up by Royal Charter in 1969 and began its teaching in 1971. With the headquarters in the city of Milton Keynes in England, it stretches out its educational provision under the administration of 13 regional centres.

Since its inception, the UKOU has been offering its programmes of study to all adults who reside in the UK. Since 1992, it has opened its courses to learners in Europe and has started its accreditation service to other institutions. With the developments of information and communication technology, the University also provides on-line courses to students physically located in different parts of the world. Moreover, a significant number of people purchase some UKOU learning materials from bookshops, and use them. These different types of learners consist of the profile of UKOU's students and clients. In 1997/8 (Open University, 1999c), there were 209,452 students and clients (by headcount). Out of 165,289 students, 112,471 (about 68 per cent) were undergraduates. This scale makes the UKOU the largest single teaching institution in the UK (Open University, 1999a).

For its students and clients, the UKOU provides a variety of educational opportunities. The UKOU's courses, developed by course teams and transmitted via media, are taught to part-time students. Although the OU cannot monopolise the market of part-time higher education adult students anymore (Mill & Tait, 1997), there were still 176 courses available at undergraduate level and 229 courses in certificate, diploma, masters and taught doctorate programmes in the year 1998 (Open University, 1999c). The UKOU's research programme leads to the awards of PhD, MPhil, and BPhil. The research students, mostly part-time, work on their research projects directed by their supervisors. There were 1,427 postgraduate research students in 1997/1998 (Open University, 1999c). The UKOU as an educational organisation for adults produces non-award-bearing study packs for its clients as well. Study packs are self-contained with no exams and no assessed written work. They can be studied at any time and at the learner's own pace. In 1998, the UKOU provided 218 study packs (Open University, 1999c).

This chapter, giving an account of the UKOU, aims to provide the background information necessary for the study, in order to facilitate the basic understanding required for the data analyses in following chapters. This chapter looks at UKOU's courses -- particularly at the undergraduate level and the courses within the School of Education -- and the system for course construction. And it mainly describes the UKOU around the year 1993, the year that the fieldwork was conducted. This chapter starts with an introduction to the UKOU's courses in general, followed by an account of undergraduate courses. Afterwards, the educational opportunities provided by the School of Education, particularly the undergraduate courses, are analysed because this is the place where the observation data are collected. Finally, UKOU's system for course construction is delineated. In other words, this chapter is divided into the following four main parts.

- UKOU's courses
- UKOU's undergraduate courses
- Undergraduate courses provided by the School of Education
- UKOU's system for course construction

4.2 UKOU's courses

In 1993, the UKOU had nine teaching units: Faculty of Arts, Faculty of Social Sciences, Faculty of Science, Faculty of Mathematics, Faculty of Technology, School of Education, Institute of Health and Social Welfare, School of Management and Centre for Modern Languages. They provided 135 undergraduate courses worth 90 credits (Open University, 1992e). Moreover, 54 credits of courses were on offer in the levels of master, diploma and certificate in the year (Open University, 1994b).

In order to clarify the term 'course' mean within the UKOU, the credit rating system of UKOU's courses is introduced next.

4.2.1 *Credit rating of a course*

The credit rating of a course refers to the workload value of a course. The use of '*credit*' to measure a course was introduced by the UKOU to England when the University was established. This innovation is one of the contributions of the University to the higher education in England (Perry, 1976, pp.60-61). To date, the credit rating system of the UKOU is applied to the courses in undergraduate programme as well as certificate, diploma, master and taught doctorate programmes.

The UKOU designs its credit rating system for its students who study part-time by comparing the study load with that of a full-time student at a conventional university. The basic assumption is that a student's study load for a UKOU one-credit course equals half the amount of work put in by a full-time student in a conventional university. Then, how many study hours per credit for UKOU's course? In the beginning, it was assumed that a student of the UKOU would spend 10 hours in a week to study a one-credit (full-credit) course. Thus, a one-credit course meant that a student needed to spend 390 hours (including 30 hours in a summer school) in an academic year that lasted for 36 weeks (Perry, 1976, p.64). In 1981, a one-credit course was taken to mean 12 hours of work per

week for the 32 weeks of the academic year and the course represented one-sixth of a degree (Rowntree, 1981, p.1). In 1992, a full-credit course normally required a student to study 420 hours (on average, 12 hours in a week) or 450 hours if it included a summer school (Open University, 1992b). It can be seen that the UKOU has weighted a course differently in different years for responding to changed British educational environment.

After clarifying the meaning of a course within the UKOU, the following section focuses on the undergraduate courses of the UKOU.

4.3 UKOU's undergraduate courses

The undergraduate programme, started in 1971, was the first programme of study provided by the UKOU. It became the biggest programme of study of the University in 1992, with 80,212 students (on a head count basis) which is about 70 per cent of the whole student number (115,255 students) in that year (Open University, 1994a, p.7).

What are the features of UKOU's undergraduate programme? The UKOU's undergraduate courses are analysed next from following four perspectives.

- Course credits
- Course levels
- Course life
- Student population per course

4.3.1 Course credits

How many credits were offered in UKOU's undergraduate programme? In terms of course credits, the University provided the following two kinds of undergraduate course in 1993.

- full (one) credit course
- half credit course

Table 4-1 lists the number of undergraduate courses by course credits in 1993 (Open University, 1992e).

[Table 4- 1] Number of Undergraduate Courses by Course Credits (in 1993)

Teaching Units	Number of Undergraduate Courses		Total	
	Full-credit Courses	Half-credit Courses	Number of Courses	Number of Credits
Arts Faculty	10	13	23	16.5
Social Sciences Faculty	17	4	21	19
School of Education	2	8	10	6
Mathematics Faculty	4	18	22	13
Science Faculty	3	21	24	13.5
Technology Faculty	5	25	31	17.5
Institute of Health and Social Welfare	0	1	1	0.5
*U Courses	4	0	4	4
Total	45 (33%)	90 (67%)	135 (100%)	90

*U courses: cross-faculty courses

The above table tells that in total 90 credits undergraduate courses were offered to students in 1993.

4.3.2 Course levels

The level of a course indicates the intellectual demand of a course. It signifies the difficulty of academic content and the sequence of study. Before 1994, the UKOU differentiated its undergraduate courses according to the following four levels.

- the foundation (first-level) courses
- the second-level courses
- the third-level courses
- the fourth-level courses

The UKOU’s foundation courses were designed to provide an introduction to the academic area. Apart from this, the courses also helped students with the development of study skills that were needed for continuing studying with the University. The UKOU’s second-level courses often aimed at the general exploration of a particular discipline. Some of them functioned as the foundation course of a particular discipline in faculty/school. And some (i.e., the U courses) were cross-faculty. The UKOU’s third-

level courses commonly had a narrow focus on a particular subject. And the UKOU’s fourth-level courses comprised more independent studies that involved, for example, project work. Table 4-2 lists the number of the UKOU’s undergraduate courses by course levels in 1993 (Open University, 1992e).

[Table 4- 2] Numbers of Undergraduate Courses by Course Levels (in 1993)

Teaching Units	Number of Undergraduate Courses				
	Foundation Courses	second-level Courses	third-level Courses	fourth-level Courses	Total
Arts Faculty	1	8	12	2	23
Social Sciences Faculty	1	8	11	1	21
School of Education	0	7	3	0	10
Mathematics Faculty	1	9	11	1	22
Science Faculty	1	11	12	0	24
Technology Faculty	1	16	12	1	30
Institute of Health and Social Welfare	0	1	0	0	1
*U courses	0	4	0	0	4
Total	5 (4%)	64 (47%)	61 (45%)	5 (4%)	135 (100%)

*U courses: cross-faculty courses

The above table shows that there were seven teaching units at the UKOU offering undergraduate courses in 1993. The courses provided were mainly in second and third levels. Not all teaching units offered foundation and fourth-level courses.

Both the course levels and course credits described above provide a primary understanding of undergraduate courses at the UKOU. In this study, the data collected from fieldwork show that course team members were concerned about both course life and student population per course. These two issues are thus discussed below respectively.

4.3.3 Course life

The term ‘course life’ refers to the number of years over which a course is presented. The life of a course indicates how recent the content of a course is. The analysis of course lives shows the age distribution of courses.

In 1993, the norm set by the UKOU for the life of an undergraduate course was eight years (Open University, 1992c). But a course was allowed to have a shorter life if it was proposed that the course content or subject matter was particularly sensitive to rapid changes. A course could also be presented for an 'indefinite' number of years if the subject matter of the course does not change rapidly. Such a course can be maintained longer than the norm provided that the course is subject to regular reviews in order to make sure that the subject matter remains the same. Table 4-3 presents the numbers of undergraduate courses by course life in 1993 based on the official list of the information on undergraduate courses (Open University, 1992e).

[Table 4- 3] Numbers of Undergraduate Courses by Course Life (in 1993)

Course Life		Number of Undergraduate Courses	
Less than 8 years	2 years	3	20 (15%)
	3 years	1	
	4 years	9	
	5 years	0	
	6 years	6	
	7 years	1	
8 years		33	(24%)
More than 8 years	9 years	9	64 (47%)
	10 years	35	
	11 years	5	
	12 years	4	
	13 years	3	
	14 years	0	
	15 years	1	
	16 years	3	
	17 years	2	
	18 years	1	
	19 years	0	
	20 years	1	
*Indefinite years		18	(13%)
Total number of courses		135	(100%)
Mean of course life (excluding the courses presented indefinitely)		9.01 years	

*Indefinite years: courses presented indefinitely but reviewed regularly

The above table shows that UKOU undergraduate courses in 1993 were on average presented for 9.01 years. This length of course life is longer than the set norm (i.e., eight years). Only a few undergraduate courses (i.e., 15 per cent) have shorter lives.

4.3.4 Student population per course

What is the minimum number of students required for an undergraduate course?

According to Perry (1976, p.259), the UKOU set a planning target for its undergraduate programme of 87 course credits in a year. They also set a planning target of 64,000 students (equivalent to 70,000 student courses at an average of 1.1 courses per year). This meant that a course should attract an average of 800 students if the University intended to maintain the programme cost effectively.

In 1991, the UKOU provided 138 courses totalling to 89 credits in the undergraduate programme. There were 75,076 students registered who studied a total of 85,567 student courses (Open University, 1992c). This means that on average each student took 1.1 courses in the year; each course attracted 620 students; and each full-credit equivalent course received 961 students.

By using these figures, UKOU's undergraduate programme in 1992 is analysed below. The UKOU in 1992 provided undergraduate courses totalling 87 course credits (Open University, 1993b, p.7). This number of course credits reached the above-mentioned Perry's target of 87. The total number of registered undergraduate students in 1992 was 80,212 students (Open University, 1994a, p.7). This was much more than the above-mentioned targeted number of 64,000 students against Perry's criteria. The student population per course in UKOU's undergraduate programme in 1992 are listed in the following table 4-4 (Open University, 1994a).

[Table 4- 4] Numbers of Courses by Student Population in Undergraduate Programme (in 1992)

*Student Population		Number of Courses	
less than 800 students	1 – 99 students	12	97 (72%)
	100 – 199 students	19	
	200 – 299 students	20	
	300 – 399 students	13	
	400 – 499 students	9	
	500 – 599 students	9	
	600 – 699 students	8	
	700 – 799 students	7	
800 students and more	800 – 899 students	7	38 (28%)
	900 – 999 students	8	
	1000 – 1999 students	13	
	2000 – 2999 students	4	
	3000 – 3999 students	3	
	4000 – 4999 students	1	
	5000 – 5999 students	0	
	6000 – 6999 students	1	
	7000 – 7999 students	1	
Total (Students): 80,212			
Total (Courses): 135 (100%)			
Average (Student Population per Course): 594.16 students			

*Student population: including undergraduate and associate students

The above table shows that the average student population of UKOU's undergraduate courses in 1992 was 594.16 students. This is lower than Perry's target of 800 students. There were 72 per cent of courses that had fewer students than the target. And only 28 per cent of courses met Perry's target. It is thus suggested that most UKOU's undergraduate courses in 1992 had a low student population. And a considerable number of undergraduate courses could not attract enough students. This situation had a clear impact on the work of course teams of undergraduate courses.

To sum up, section 4.3 draws the profile of UKOU's undergraduate courses around year 1993. In that time, most undergraduate courses were at second and third levels. An undergraduate course on average had a longer course life than the set norm. The majority of undergraduate courses had low student populations, against Perry's criterion of 800 students. Since the undergraduate programme is the oldest programme of study at the University, the issue of aging courses had started to emerge. How to construct new undergraduate courses that could attract more students became an issue for course teams.

After the investigation of UKOU's undergraduate courses, the focus in next section narrows down to the educational opportunities provided by the School of Education, particularly to its undergraduate courses.

4.4 Undergraduate courses provided by the School of Education

The School of Education, previously named the Faculty of Educational Studies, was set up in 1971 two years after the establishment of the Faculty of Arts, the Faculty of Social Sciences, the Faculty of Science and the Faculty of Mathematics (Open University, 1973, p.78). It was against this background that school teachers made up the largest occupational group among the students of the first intake of the University -- 40.1 per cent of finally registered students of the University in 1971 (Open University, 1973, p.26).

The School of Education started with an undergraduate programme. The first courses were presented in 1972. Since then, the School has continued to develop different types of study programme. It also produces various study packs to clients. The scale of its educational provision in 1993/1994 and in 1999/2000 is presented in table 4-5 (Open University, 1993b, 1999b).

[Table 4- 5] Educational Provision of the School of Education

Category	in 1993/1994	in 1999/2000
Undergraduate programme	• 10 courses	• 5 courses
Diploma programme	• 3 kinds of advanced diploma: – Advanced Diploma in Special Needs in Education – Advanced Diploma in Educational Management – Advanced Diplomas in Mathematics Education	• 3 kinds of advanced diploma: – Advanced Diploma in Special Needs in Education – Advanced Diploma in Child Development – Advanced Diploma in Language and Literacy
	• 1 professional diploma: – Professional Diploma in Post-compulsory Education	–
MA programme	• 11 courses	• 14 courses
Taught doctorate programme	–	• 10 lines of study
Other postgraduate qualifications	• Certificate of Professional Development in Education	• a range of certificates in Continuing Professional Development
		• National Professional Qualification for Headship
		• Certificate in the Co-ordination of Special Educational Needs
Research studies	• by research	• by research
Study packs and in-service resources	• 49 kinds	• 53 kinds

The above table tells us that the School of Education provides a wide range of educational opportunities for learners. It also awards various qualifications to students. A comparison of the number of courses offered in 1999/2000 and 1993/1994 shows that the School's undergraduate programme is shrinking. In contrast, Both the MA and taught doctorate programmes are growing. Moreover, the above table shows that the School not only aims at school teachers, but also recruits those who intend to be school teachers and those who are merely 'interested in education'. Under these circumstances, the courses provided by the School cover both the practice and theory of education.

The profile of the undergraduate programme of the School of Education in 1993 (Open University, 1992e) is presented in table 4-6.

[Table 4- 6] Profile of Undergraduate Courses provided by the School of Education (in 1993)

Aspect	Number of Courses	
Course credit	* full-credit course: 2 courses (20%)	[Total]: 10 courses (100%) 6 credits
	* half-credit course: 8 courses (80%)	
Course level	* foundation course: 0 course	
	* second-level course: 7 courses (70%)	
	* third-level course: 3 courses (30%)	
	* fourth-level course: 0 course	
Course life	* less than 8 years: 3 courses (30%)	[Mean]: 7.5 years
	* 8 years: 4 courses (40%)	
	* more than 8 years: 3 courses (30%)	

The above table shows that the School of Education provided 10 undergraduate courses, worth six credits, in 1993. This was a smaller provision compared with those of other teaching units (Open University, 1992e). Within these courses, 70 per cent were at second level. Thus most of these courses were at lower level. The course life of undergraduate courses at that time was on average 7.5 years. This is slightly shorter than the norm decided by the University (i.e., eight years, see section 4.3.3). In short, the undergraduate programme of the School of Education in 1993 only offered a small number of courses. Being mostly second level, they were less specialist and were normally presented for a shorter period than eight years.

However, the undergraduate programme of the School in 1993 faced challenges in the following two areas.

- Number of credits
- Student market and population

4.4.1 Number of credits

The number of credits offered to students indicates the scale of the study programme. Did the undergraduate programme of the School of Education ever expand since the School was set up? An explanation for the variation of the amounts of course credits in the School's undergraduate programme is given next.

To get the picture of how many course credits the School provides in a year, two types of figures are given below: (1) credits in planning stage; and (2) credits in presentation (i.e., the actual amount). Table 4-7 lists the numbers of course credits, both planned and in presentation, in the School's undergraduate programme from 1973 to 1991 (Open University, 1983a, 1984, 1985, 1986, 1987, 1988, 1989b, 1990b, 1991b, 1992d, 1993c). In the table, credits are in 'FCE' (i.e., full-credit equivalents).

[Table 4- 7] Numbers of Credits in the Undergraduate Programme of the School of Education

Year	Number of *Credits in Plan	Number of Credits in Presentation
1973		3
1974	10	4
1975	10	4
1976	10	6
1977	10	7
1978	10	8
1879	10	9
1980	10	8
1981	10	10
1982	10	12
1983	8	11
1984	8	11
1985	8	11
1986	8	10
1987	8	10
1988	8	10
1989	8	7
1990	8	7
1991	8	7

*Credit: in FCE (i.e., full-credit equivalents), to nearest whole number

The above table shows that there is a decrease in planned credits in the School's undergraduate programme. The figures of credits in presentation grow initially and decrease gradually.

Why have the amounts of course credits in the School's undergraduate programme had such a variation during the years? To understand this, changes in the University's policy need to be examined.

The UKOU monitors the change of the size of its courses and students. The University realised for the first time in 1974 that its educational provision appeared to be moving towards a steady state (Open University, 1975, p.10). This implied that the maintenance

of existing courses and the re-making of courses would become the major work. And there would be less emphasis on the creation of wholly new courses. Thus, the University from that time could predict the future of the provision of courses based on relatively firm judgements. At this point, the University started to consider what the future undergraduate programme was likely to be. After investigation, the University decided that the final profile of its undergraduate courses should be a total of 87 course credits and should be achieved by 1984. Within the profile, the Faculty of Educational Studies was allocated 10 FCEs (Perry, 1976, p.75). This figure was one of the lowest among the six teaching units.

The Faculty of Educational Studies reached a turning point in the early eighties. The Review Group set up by the Senate of the University in 1982 produced a report on the University's provision. It suggested that the existing Faculty of Educational Studies be re-organised as a new School of Education by merging with the In-Service Teacher Training (INSET) section of the Centre for Continuing Education. In this way, the provision in educational studies of the University could cover the undergraduate, higher degree and continuing education programmes (Open University, 1983b, p.50). Thus, the University could redirect the limited amount of resources in educational studies from the provision of undergraduate courses to courses at 'advanced professional development' level, including postgraduate degree, diplomas and in-service training courses. The undergraduate profile of courses in educational studies thus should be reduced to courses valued at eight credits by the end of the decade (Open University, 1984, p.19). The released two credits worth of academic and production resources would be used for the courses of advanced professional development. Based on the proposal, the School of Education was formally established in 1983 (Open University, 1984, p.19). From that time onwards, the targeted ceiling of the School's undergraduate programme became eight FCEs.

The actual number of course credits of the School's undergraduate courses in that time (i.e., in the early eighties) was higher than the target. The School thus started to limit its provision of undergraduate courses. The number of actual course credits offered dropped

gradually. In 1989, the School only offered undergraduate courses together worth 7 credits. Thus, the School had already met the target. However, the downward trend continued.

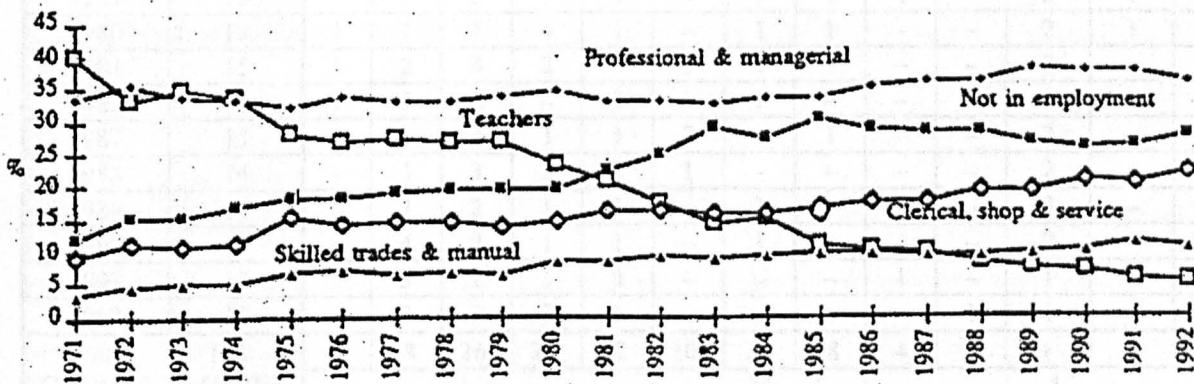
It can be claimed that the reduction of credits in the undergraduate programme was driven by the University policy. There were two reasons for the reduction. (1) The undergraduate programme was asked to give a space for the development of other new programmes of study within the School. (2) The traditional student market of the School's undergraduate programme continued shrinking because the non-graduate school teachers had gradually been awarded their first degree by the University and did not need to study undergraduate courses anymore. The second point is explored more below.

4.4.2 Student market and population

As has been mentioned above, the School of Education used to treat unqualified school teachers as its student market because the biggest student group in the first intake of students of the UKOU was the school teachers. However, the University found that

‘the most significant change in the characteristics of the student body has been the decline in proportion of teachers entering the undergraduate programmes. ... fallen from 40% in 1971 to 5% in 1991 remaining at this level in 1992’ (Open University, 1994a, pp.59-60).

Figure 4-1 illustrates this decline (Open University, 1994a, p.60).



From: Open University (1994a, p.60)
[Figure 4- 1] Declined Teacher Intake of UKOU's Undergraduate Programme (in 1971-1992)

From the above figure, it is clear that the percentage of school teachers in student population in UKOU's undergraduate programme continued to drop from 1971 to 1992. Thus, the traditional student market of the undergraduate programme in the School of Education had been shrinking. The university-wide demographic change in student intake presented problems for the undergraduate programme of the School of Education.

Although the undergraduate programme was the first programme of study in the School of Education, the proportion of undergraduate students within the overall student population of the School has reduced over time. For instance, they comprised only about 57 per cent of the whole student profile of the School by 1993 (Boyd-Barrett, 1993). Table 4-8 lists the numbers of undergraduate courses in the School of Education according to the ranges of student population from 1972 to 1982 and from 1987 to 1992 (Open University, 1983a, 1989a, 1990a, 1991a, 1992a, 1993a, 1994a). The variation of student population per course can be seen in the table.

[Table 4- 8] Numbers of Undergraduate Courses in the School of Education by Student Population

Year	Number of Courses	Number of Undergraduate Courses by the Range of Student Population													
		0	100	200	300	400	500	600	700	800	900	1,000	2,000	3,000	
		~ 99	~ 199	~ 299	~ 399	~ 499	~ 599	~ 699	~ 799	~ 899	~ 999	~ 1,999	~ 2,999	~ 3,999	
1972	3	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	2	
1973	6	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	2	3	1	
1974	8	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	1	—	1	3	1	1	
1975	8	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	1	1	—	5	—	—	
1976	10	—	—	—	3	1	1	—	1	1	1	1	1	—	
1977	12	—	1	2	3	1	—	1	1	—	—	3	—	—	
1978	13	—	2	1	4	1	—	—	1	—	1	3	—	—	
1979	13	—	1	3	—	4	—	—	1	1	—	2	1	—	
1980	13	1	1	1	4	1	—	1	1	—	—	2	1	—	
1981	15	1	2	4	2	—	3	1	—	—	—	2	—	—	
1982	18	1	5	2	4	3	—	1	—	—	1	1	—	—	
1987	15	1	1	3	3	1	3	—	1	—	—	2	—	—	
1988	14	—	3	3	2	3	1	—	—	—	—	2	—	—	
1989	11	—	3	2	1	2	—	1	—	—	—	2	—	—	
1990	11	—	4	2	1	1	—	1	—	—	—	2	—	—	
1991	12	1	3	2	1	3	—	—	—	1	—	1	—	—	
1992	11	2	2	1	3	1	—	—	—	—	1	1	—	—	
Total (17 years)	193 (100%)	7	28	26	31	22	10	6	8	4	5	34	8	4	
		114 (59%)					24 (12%)			55 (28%)					
		138 (72%)													

The above table shows that 72 per cent of the undergraduate courses in the School of Education recruited less than 800 students between 1972 and 1992. Only 28 per cent of the undergraduate courses recruited more than 800 students. For 59 per cent of the undergraduate courses the enrolment was less than 500 students. In short, most of the School's undergraduate courses did not attract enough students.

The table implies that the School of Education has difficulties in getting students to study its undergraduate courses. How to increase the attraction of the courses appears to be a crucial task for the course team of School's undergraduate course.

To sum up, section 4.4 sketches the undergraduate courses provided by the School of Education of the UKOU around 1993. The undergraduate programme in that time faced the following two challenges: (1) the reduction in the number of course credits which they were allowed to offer; (2) a shrinking traditional student market and low student population. The existence of these two threats meant that the undergraduate programme in the School of Education became problematic. The School of Education did not treat its undergraduate programme as a major developmental area for some time although it was the first programme of study in the School.

This section and previous two sections provide the background information of UKOU's courses. Since this study investigates course teams and their work, it is necessary to see how the UKOU formally organises a course team and controls its work. Thus, the following discussion focuses on UKOU's system for course construction.

4.5 UKOU's system for course construction

The UKOU has set up a sophisticated system for course construction. Within this system, the first step is the formation of the course team. The work of the course team during the stages of course approval, course development and course production is primarily

centrally controlled. The formation of this system can be traced back to the early time of the Planning Committee (1969, p.10). By adopting the concept of a systems approach, the system regulates and monitors the work of course construction. Although the system is very important, its bad impact to the operation of the institution is criticised; and its relationship with the nature of distance education is discussed (see section 2.3).

Regarding the system, the '*Production Handbook for Open University Courses and Packs*' produced by the University outlines the official requirements. This handbook, revised constantly, has become the prime manual for day to day work in the system.

In this section, the UKOU's system for course construction, based on the Production Handbook (Open University, 1992c), is introduced. The following two aspects of the system are addressed.

- Overview of the course construction process
- Official procedures for constructing a course

4.5.1 Overview of the course construction process

At the University, the course construction process can be divided into the following three phases.

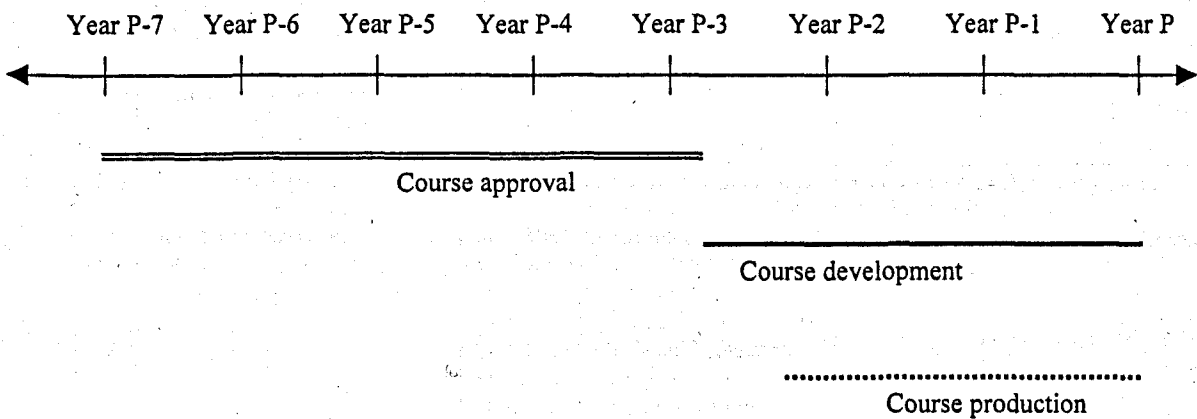
- Course approval
- Course development
- Course production

The work of course construction begins with the planning of a course. The course proposal is produced, and is approved by various authorities at the University. After the course proposal is formally accepted, the course team is officially set up. Course team members of a course team develop the course by writing, participating in meetings, reading various drafts and commenting on other's work. Once the course team starts to hand over the final drafts of course materials to the editor, course production starts.

Course materials are produced from the prototype to multiple copies, depending on the

number of learners estimated. The copies of course materials are distributed to students and tutors by the time that the course is presented.

The Production Handbook regulates above-mentioned activities against a timetable. Aiming at Year P (i.e., the year that the course is presented for the first time), the work of course construction can be traced back to Year P-7 (i.e., the seventh year before the course is presented for the first time). This is a long period of time. In order to provide a general picture, an overview of the course construction system at the UKOU against a year-based timetable is drawn in figure 4-2.



[Figure 4- 2] Overview of the Course Construction Process at the UKOU

The above figure illustrates how course construction at the UKOU consists of three phases: (1) course approval, (2) course development and (3) course production. The time to conduct the whole work is quite long. Considerable amount of work is carried out in the last three years before the course is presented for the first time. The official procedures for constructing a course is delineated further below.

4.5.2 Official procedures for constructing a course

The official procedures for constructing a course are detailed in the '*Course Planning Calendar*' (see appendix). The calendar is the formal timetable for people whose work is related to course construction. It is the prescribed schedule of the activities in course

construction. The calendar is structured by listing time, activities, working units and key persons. All the scheduled activities in the calendar aim at Year P. UKOU's official procedures for constructing a course in 1992 is illustrated in table 4-9 by listing the major activities and the years to carry out the activities (Open University, 1992c).

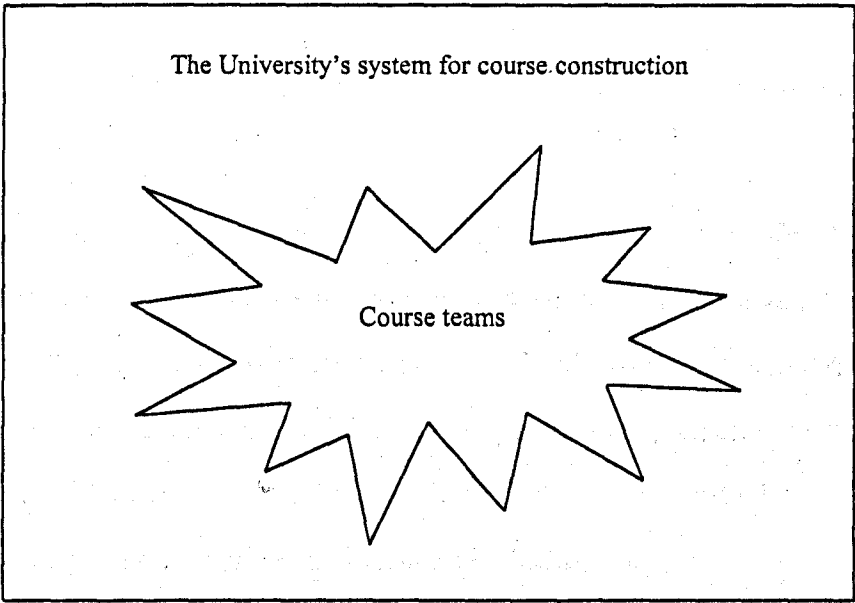
[Table 4- 9] Summary of the UKOU's Official Procedures for Constructing a Course (in 1992)

	Course Construction		
	Course Approval	Course Development	Course Production
*Year P-7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Proposer discusses the course with Dean and Head of Discipline / Programme Board Director. 		
Year P-6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reference to the course is included in Academic Unit's forward five-year plan. 		
Year P-5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Course plan is refined in Unit's forward five-year plan. 		
Year P-4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Course plan is further refined to Unit's forward five-year plan. Course team prepares the estimate of audio-visual requirements. 		
Year P-3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Academic Unit proves the course proposal and the name of external assessor. Pro-Vice-Chancellor gives academic approval to course proposal. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Course Team applies for summer school, course reader / externally published course material, teaching and assessment strategy and computing resource. Academic Unit applies for broadcast audio-visual resource. Course Team considers home experiment kits, students with disabilities and development and production resource. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Course Team signs off Course Production Plan. Course population forecast for year P is issued.
Year P-2		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Course Team applies for course readers and co-publication. Course Team sends out the tutor qualifications/experience details and the questionnaire for the safety of home experiment kits. Faculty applies for development and production resource. Course team starts to handover the copy for co-published text. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Budgets for new and re-made courses are set. Production Routing meeting is held. Tenders for co-published courses and course readers are awarded. Full schedules for production of print components are issued. Course production meetings begin. Update of course population forecast is issued.
Year P-1		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Course Team informs the proposed set books, the details of assignment requirements and course presentation, and broadcast transmission requirements. Faculty sends out the development and production resource estimate spreadsheet, revised course presentation spreadsheet and nominations of internal and external examiners. Library guide is arranged. Course Team starts to handover the copy for course readers and of home experiment kits booklets. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Completed course presentation schedules are issued. All material for first mailing ready for tutor briefing mailing, and pre packing for students. Update of course population forecast is issued. Course quotas are set. Broadcast and Assignment Calendar is produced.
Year P		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> External assessor's report on the course is submitted. 	(Students begin the course.)

*Year P-7: the seventh year before the course is presented for the first time

The above table implies that the University controls both the types of activity in course construction and timing of the activities. The course team in the system is asked by the University to complete the activities on schedule.

The table also shows that course teams are set up according to the regulations of the system. Moreover, course teams have to work within the system although course team members are mainly academics who should have academic autonomy. The relationship between course teams and the system is illustrated in figure 4-3.



[Figure 4- 3] Relationship between Courses Teams and the University's System for Course Construction

To sum up, the UKOU organises the work of course construction by aiming at Year P. The work can be started as early as Year P-7 (i.e., the seventh year before the course is presented for the first time in Year P). The whole process contains course approval, course development and course production phases. The course proposal for a course should be approved by highest level of authority early in Year P-3. Afterwards, a course team is formally set up. The course team is particularly busy in course development in both Year P-3 and Year P-2. The course is continuously developed and the prototype of its course materials starts to be handed over to editor in late Year P-2. In the phase of course production, the course materials are produced into multiple copies. The students and tutors receive their course materials by the time that the course is presented in Year

P. In the whole process of course construction, the course planning calendar is the key mechanism designed by the University to control the overall work.

Since the observation data collected in this study are located mainly in the early stages of course development, they are relevant to the work in the phases of course approval and course development. Both the official course approval and the activities officially required for course development described in 1992 are thus introduced next.

Official course approval

According to the Production Handbook (1992c), the UKOU's courses are approved step by step (see below).

- Academic staff contacts his/her head of discipline/department/centre and Dean/Director for discussing the idea of developing a new course.
- Once the idea is accepted by the faculty/school/institute, it is incorporated within the academic unit's forward five-year course plan that is revised annually by the Faculty/School/Institute Board and submitted to the Programme Development Committee and Academic Board.
- A formal course proposal that contains more details needs to be prepared in Year P-3. After approved by the academic unit (in September / early October meeting of the Faculty/School/Institute Board at the latest), it should be submitted for approval by the Programme Development Committee in the autumn of Year P-3.

The key for receiving the approval for a course is getting the '*course proposal*' accepted. To approve the course proposal, the academic and pedagogic issues from the proposal are debated in the Faculty/School/Institute Board. A separate consideration by appropriate committees (e.g., Teaching and Counselling Committee, Examinations and Assessment Committee) is needed if it is necessary. In the course proposal, twenty-five items of information need to be provided by a planned course team. They are listed in table 4-10 (Open University, 1992c).

[Table 4- 10] Information Needed to be Provided in Course Proposal

Information Needed to be Provided in Course Proposal	
1	general descriptions, including course title, course category (in terms of course production), credit rating, course presentation (the years of first and last presentation year and the number of years that the course is going to be presented) and the names of course team chair person and course manager
2	the outline of the content of the course
3	the aims and objectives of the course
4	the place of the course in the faculty/school plan and its role in each award towards which it may count for credit
5	prerequisite courses
6	Europe-wide and UK relevance
7	access and equal opportunities
8	meeting the needs of disabled students
9	justification for course level
10	relationship with other courses and external recognition
11	Scottish / National Vocational Qualifications
12	programme of study (in which the course will be available)
13	resources
14	student number forecast
15	multiple use (i.e., additional use of course materials)
16	tutorial strategy
17	assessment strategy
18	student workload
19	developmental testing
20	residential school
21	home experiment kit
22	computing
23	printed material
24	broadcasting and/or audio visual materials
25	course team (by name, staff category, faculty/unit, role)

At the UKOU, the course proposal is shaped as a form called '*UCA 1 form*'. It is the mechanism that controls the first major stage in the whole process of course construction. The UKOU has designed other UCA forms as well. They are delineated in following section that describes the activities officially required for course development.

Activities officially required for course development

The UKOU asks a course team to conduct a number of activities during the course development phase, and uses, mainly, 'UCA forms' to control these activities. The UCA forms are the forms designed for a course team to apply for the approval of the major activities in course construction. The UCA forms function as the mechanism for the UKOU to oversee the work of course construction, which directly affects the success of the courses to be offered. In addition to course proposal, the UCA forms also include a

questionnaire for the safety of home experiment kits, the proposals for the external assessor, residential school, co-production / co-financing, teaching and assessment strategy and course reader / externally published course material, and the bids for academic computing resource, audio-visual production resource and course development and production resource. The wide coverage of the forms reveals that the UKOU attempts to control the quality of courses from various perspectives.

The UCA forms are numbered. In the Production Handbook issued in 1992, they were UCA 1, 3, 4, 5a, 5b, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11 and 12. The course team needed to fill in these forms in certain time in order to get approvals and resources. Table 4-11 lists the names of UCA forms and the time for submission (Open University, 1992c).

[Table 4- 11] UCA Forms and the Schedule for Submission (in 1992)

UCA Form		Schedule for Submission
• UCA 1 form	Course / study pack proposal	• Academic units send UCA 1 (course proposal) forms to Office for Programme Development in early October in *Year P-3.
• UCA 3 form	Course/pack assessor nomination form	• Academic units send UCA 3 (external assessor) forms to Office for Programme Development in early October in Year P-3.
• UCA 4 form	Co-production / co-financing proposal	
• UCA 5a form	Course resource specification and estimate submitted in Year P-2	• Faculties send UCA 5a (development and production resource) estimate spreadsheets to Office for Programme Development in mid January in Year P-2.
• UCA 5b form	Course resource specification and estimate submitted in Year P-1	• Faculties send UCA 5b (development and production resource) estimate spreadsheets to Office for Programme Development in late February in Year P-1.
• UCA 7 form	Summer school proposal	• Course teams send first draft of UCA 7 to Residential Schools Section by the end of October in Year P-3. Course teams send final residential school proposals on UCA 7 forms to Residential Schools Section in mid February in Year P-2.
• UCA 8 form	Broadcast and audio-visual resource bid	• Academic units send details of their allocations together with any additional broadcast audio-visual bids on UCA 8 form to Secretary to Broadcast and Audio-Visual Sub-Committee in November in Year P-3.
• UCA 9 form	Computing proposal	• Course teams send UCA 9 (computing resource bid) forms to the Secretary of the Academic Computing Committee in early November in Year P-3.
• UCA 10 form	Application for course reader / externally published course material	• Course teams send UCA 10 forms for co-published course material to Courses Office in late May in Year P-3. Course teams send UCA 10a forms for course readers to Courses Office in April in Year P-2.
• UCA 11 form	Teaching and assessment strategy proposal	• Course teams send UCA 11 (course presentation strategy) forms to Senior Assistant Registrar (Teaching and Assessment) in October in Year P-3.
• UCA 12 form	Safety approval questionnaire	• Course teams send UCA 12 (home experiment kits safety questionnaire) to Courses Office in April in Year P-2.

*Year P-3: the third year before the course is presented for the first time

The above table shows that UCA 1, 3, 7, 8, 9, 10 and 11 need to be submitted in Year P-3 (i.e., the third year before the course is presented for the first time). This indicates that the University wants a course team to start working on course development three years before the course is presented. In other words, a course team normally works on its course for at least three years.

To sum up, section 4.5 describes the UKOU's system for course construction. In this section, the process of course construction is divided into the following three phases: (1) course approval; (2) course development; and (3) course production. All the activities in the process are administered against a timetable. To guide the work, the University has designed the 'course planning calendar' that is included in the official production handbook. To make the work for course development conducted in time, the UCA forms are used. Course teams -- grouped mainly by academics who possess academic autonomy -- are set up and located within the system. They need to follow the regulations of the system.

4.6 Summary of the chapter

This chapter provides the background information about the UKOU for the study. The focus was on the University's courses, particularly undergraduate-level courses, around year 1993. The undergraduate programme was the first academic programme of the University. The majority of undergraduate courses were at second and third levels at that time. The average undergraduate course possessed a long course life. Most of undergraduate courses were with lower student population.

The focus then goes down to the educational opportunities provided by the School of Education of the UKOU. The undergraduate courses offered by the School have been facing the following crises: (1) reduction in course credits; and (2) narrowed traditional student market and low student population. These can affect to course team's work.

Finally, the University's system for course construction was described. The overall work of course construction consists of three major phases, i.e., course approval, development and production. Major work on the course construction starts last three years before the course is presented for the first time although early work starts at Year P-7. The University controls the major activities of course construction centrally. The Production Handbook is distributed as a guide. The 'course planning calendar' in the handbook schedules all the activities and the UCA forms guide the major work.

The following three chapters are the analyses of empirical data collected from interviews and observations. Chapter 5 delineates the formation of course teams. Chapter 6 presents the process of working together as a team in course team meetings. Chapter 7 reports the development of courses by course teams. The findings in these three chapters are discussed in Chapter 8. In the chapter, the overall conclusions are theorised and discussed; the reflections on the conduct of the study are provided in the end.

Chapter 5

The Formation of Course Teams

5.1 Introduction

The exploration of the course team approach starts from investigating how course teams look. This is a question often raised by people who are interested in the course team approach. The practitioners in the field of open and distance education are particularly curious about how the course teams of the UKOU are formulated.

This chapter describes the formation of the UKOU's course teams based on the data collected in this study. There is a process for a course team to be grouped, to be formally accepted and to really start its work. This chapter firstly delineates how a course team actually goes through the process. The next focus moves to the organisation of course teams. This issue is mainly linked by interviewees with the perception of the size of course teams. It is also connected with the ways to group the permanent academic staff into course teams. Regarding the responsibility of team members, the main concerns comprise the boundary of the responsibility of the course team members who are the permanent academic staff and the way they take on their responsibility. In interviews, the importance of the interpersonal relationships between course team members to their work

is emerged. This thus becomes the fourth focus of this chapter. The description of the formation of course teams in this chapter is mainly based on the interview data collected in main fieldwork. But it also includes some cross-reference to relevant documents. As a whole, this chapter investigates the following four aspects of the formation of course teams.

- The birth of a course team
- The organisation of course teams
- The distribution of responsibility in a course team
- The interpersonal relationships in a course team

5.2 Birth of a course team

The UKOU has established a mechanism for course approval (see section 4.5). So, there is a formal process of giving birth to a course team. But, how a course team is actually born? This section tells a real story.

As was mentioned in Chapter 3, three course teams are investigated in this study. Since all of them are located in the School of Education, their formal process of being approved by the School is generally the same and also mirrors the process of getting approval from the University. Hence, the process of giving birth to the course team of Course 1 is reported in this section.

The conception of Course 1 started from the discussions between an academic who afterwards became the course team chairperson, the course team chairperson of its predecessor Course 1P and the staff of Centre 1 in the School. In 1988, they decided that the original Course 1P needed to be re-made. This was about five years before Course 1 was actually presented for the first time in February 1993.

‘About 1988, there was a general awareness that the course was needed to be re-made without any doubt.’ (Catherine, the course team chairperson of Course 1)

‘Me, the chair of predecessor Course 1P and Centre 1 generally felt Course 1P should be re-made.’ (Catherine)

In the initial plan, the course was to be launched in 1992. But, the actual launch date was in fact one year later. This arose because the process of getting course approval took longer than expected and since the School also had financial difficulty.

‘We were initially going to be making a course for 1992. ... But because the agreement to make the course took for so long to get, finally, officially, it was very late. And the School of Education also had the problem of money in the end. So they decided to postpone for one year to 1993. That was actually a good decision for us. Then we had more time to produce the course.’
(Catherine)

‘We started the process of Course 1 acceptance in 1989. That was the time that we really started to draw the proposal that was discussed in Centre 1 in the School.’ (Catherine)

In 1989 (i.e., around four years before the course was actually presented for the first time), people started working on giving birth to the course. The first vital step was to produce the proposal for Course 1. Since the names of course team members was required by the University to be included into the proposal, the name of a key person, namely, the chairperson of the course team, was considered at that time.

‘Catherine ... She and the director of the Centre had established the sense of rapport about the need for the new course, developing the replacement for Course 1P.’ (Paul, a course author of Course 1)

‘... Catherine to be the chair ... she was regarded as very good and very keen.’ (Douglas, a course author of Course 1)

‘It always comes about through somebody saying: “I think we should do this and I am going to take a major responsibility to do it.”’ (Catherine)

After the name of course team chairperson was decided internally, the next main work was to write the course proposal by filling in the form of UCA 1 (see section 4.5). The provisional course team chairperson put efforts into this task by contributing her academic considerations as well as relevant experiences. The course proposal for Course 1 was discussed in the Centre 1 of the School. The Centre 1 next submitted the proposal to the sub-committees of the School (e.g., to the Programme Committee for academic

considerations and to the General Purposes Committee for finance and staffing). The proposal afterwards went to the School Board in the same year. At this big meeting, there was fierce competition from other course proposals submitted by other centres in the School. In order to get the proposal successfully accepted, informal communication was conducted.

'... Centre 1 ... This paper when we were satisfied went to a sub-committee in the School Board called the Programme Committee in 1989. ... Then the proposal has been fully discussed. It means you need to change the proposal, perhaps.' (Catherine)

'... putting forms to the committees in the School. We have a Programme Committee that decides whether a course is academically viable and that it will work academically. It was in the autumn, would have been September/October. Probably a couple of weeks later it would go to the Staff and General Purposes Committee in the School. It looks at the resources, staffing. ... You should get the right number of people to write ... so the course won't be late. ... If we haven't got enough academic staff either in the School or we can borrow from other faculties, how are we going to solve this? The main way of solving this is to pay external consultants and ask them to write specifically.' (Olivia, the course manager of Course 1)

'The School Board is a meeting of the whole school. ... It is a huge meeting, everybody ... It has been about November/December, I think. ... It has to go to the vote as to whether this course will go ahead. ... It's a big responsibility on the chair and the centre director. ... In fact, Albert as the director of Centre 1 did quite a lot of things. ... It was very close because there was another course that wanted to go through at the same time and it was one vote.' (Olivia)

'That's very necessary. ... That kind of informal discussion ... lobbying ... one reason why the course was only won by one vote because the Centre 1 is a small centre within the School. It's not one of the highest prestige parts of the School. ... That's why it was difficult for the proposal to get through. It wasn't easy.' (Catherine)

'The School Board ... I am still not sure people know who are voting for and what they aren't voting for. There are a lot of people who have been here for a long time. The personal history comes into it. People will support one another rather than looking at the case for the course. ... If you get into the decision body, it isn't simply a question of rational decision making. It's also a sort of power struggle going on explicitly or implicitly.' (Paul)

In the meeting of the School Board, voting was carried out in order to decide which course proposals should go ahead. Although the course proposal for Course 1 only got one more vote, it eventually won the competition in the meeting of the School Board.

With the approval given by the School, the proposal was sent to the University. It was approved smoothly by the University. Since then, the course team of Course 1 was formally set up.

‘It has to go on into the University. Now it was most unusual for the University not to say that’s fine because they tend to release the units to decide what they want to do with the money. But ... you are never quite sure until its actually finally approved ... It has to be submitted in December and approved over the whole of January.’ (Olivia)

Soon after the course team was officially born, the course team of Course 1 had its first course team meeting. It was in the beginning of the third year before the course was presented for the first time. After the meeting, the course team members started thinking what should be done for the course.

‘It is only really in January 1990. That is our first course team meeting, I think. We sat down first time to start thinking “OK! We’ve got this proposal. How are we going to implement it? How is it going to operate?”’ (Paul)

‘We worked for three years full-time from 1990 to 1992.’ (Catherine)

The course did not become concrete until the course team had an important long meeting lasting for two and half days in the end of the third year before the first presentation of the course. In the meeting, they concentrated on planning the course. By attending the meeting, the course team members really worked together and drew a much clearer picture of the course.

‘In December 1990, we had two and half days for the course team to get together. It was really on the line during those two and half days.’ (Paul)

‘In 1991, the thing seems to be more settled.’ (Paul)

It was felt that the work of the course team became much organised in 1991, about two years before the first presentation of the course. Most of the work for course development was conducted in that period of time.

As a whole, the above sketch shows that setting up the course team for Course 1 is a lengthy procedure. It also implies that certain staff have devoted themselves to the birth

of the course team. The process of giving birth to the course team of Course 1 is listed in table 5-1.

[Table 5- 1] Process of Giving Birth to the Course Team of Course 1

Process of Giving Birth to the Course Team of Course 1		
Time		Situation
*Year P-5	1988	People in the School of Education had the idea of re-making Course 1P by a new course called Course 1.
Year P-4	1989	People in the School of Education started to work on giving birth to Course 1. The course proposal was produced. The Centre 1 discussed the course proposal.
		The School Board of the School of Education agreed the proposal of Course 1 sent by Centre 1.
		The University approved the course proposal of Course 1. The course team of Course 1 was formally set up.
Year P-3	1990	The course team of Course 1 had its first course team meeting in January. Afterwards, course team members commenced duties.
		The course team of Course 1 had a long meeting for two and half days in December. In the meeting, the course team members really worked together as a team for course development.
Year P-2	1991	It was felt that the work of the course team was much settled. Most of the work for course development was carried out in the year.
**Year P	February, 1993	Course 1 was presented the first time.

*Year P-5: the fifth year before the first presentation of the course

**Year P: the first year of presenting the course

In summary, the idea of making Course 1 was initially derived from the consensus of a group of people about five years before the first presentation of the course. The follow-up important action was to decide the name of the course team chairperson. Afterwards, the provisional course team chairperson put considerable efforts into the production of the course proposal that is in the form of UCA 1. It was about four years before the course was actually run for the first time. The course proposal for Course 1 was firstly approved by the Centre 1 in the School of Education. Next, the proposal went to the sub-committees of the School for being examined academically and in terms of finance and staffing. The proposal afterwards went to the meeting of the School Board, which was crucial for the birth of the course team. In the meeting, the proposal competed with other proposals submitted by other centres in the School. In order to win in competition, lobbying was carried out. With only one more vote, the course proposal for Course 1 won the competition and was approved by the School. The proposal was thus submitted to the University. The process of being approved by the University was smooth. Once the

University accepted the proposal, the course team was formally set up. It was about the end of fourth year before the course was presented for the first time.

Although the course team had its first course team meeting soon after its official birth, the course team members only felt that the basics were established after a meeting lasting two and half days at the end of the third year before the first presentation of the course. In the meeting, course team members really worked together as a team for course development. Since then, the course team work became more focused.

Compared with the Course Planning Calendar included in the Production Handbook (see section 4.5), the course team of Course 1 was, generally speaking, set up on schedule. This was because the timing for course approval was controlled by University's mechanism. So, the course team of Course 1 worked for course development for three years. But the real major input to course development given by the course team was in the second year before the course was run for the first time.

5.3 Organisation of course teams

Course teams are groups of people. The number of people in course teams relates to the organisation of course teams. When the interviewees in the three course teams talked about their teams, they often raised their concern for the size of teams. Actually, they expressed their views on the size of course teams, rather than counting the number of people who are in teams. Thus, the following is reported first in this section.

- The perception of the size of course teams

Based on what the interviewees said about their teams, the size of course teams relates to the number of permanent academic staff in course teams. The following issue is hence raised as the second focus of the section.

- The involvement of the permanent academic staff in course teams

These two aspects of the organisation of course teams are depicted respectively below.

5.3.1 Perception of the size of course teams

The course team of the UKOU can contract external consultants to conduct various tasks for the team. The size of course teams thus can be measured based on the total number of people who work for the course teams. In this way, the size of course teams would not be too small. Even, many course teams of the UKOU can be called big course teams. Despite this, in this study, when the interviewees described their course teams, their perception of their course teams was the same, namely, a small course team.

‘One of the problems, I think, is that there are too few people involved.’
(Douglas, a course author of Course 2)

‘I do think it is quite small.’ (Arthur, a course author of Course 2)

‘Our team is too small.’ (Rita, the course team chairperson of Course 3)

‘It’s been a bit of a strain that there have been too few of us to go to the meetings ... for example, I am going to be on study leave now till the end of January and I don’t have to attend any meetings during that period. Arthur is officially on study leave. ... Leo has got [babies] to look after all the time. ... [And a course team member] very rarely comes to the meetings. ... So, sometimes the meetings only have [a small number of] people. If you [i.e., the researcher] weren’t there, it would look very bare. ... If we have a bigger number on the course team, it means that we are more likely to get the group together.’ (Douglas)

‘I think you need people with enthusiasm and commitment. Now there are four members in Course 1. I think it is a bit too small. ... In this course team, it largely tends to be polarised to two and two.’ (Paul, a course author of Course 1)

The above shows that the perception of the small size of course teams resulted from the small number of permanent academic staff in course teams. It was the lack of sufficient permanent academic staff that made them perceive that their course teams were small.

The small size sometimes led to difficulty in making decisions in course teams. The small size could be compounded by the absence of permanent academic staff from course team meetings. The personal reasons for their absence (e.g., study leave and family difficulty) reflected their personal circumstances. Some absences from course team meetings arose without explanation.

In their view, a course team with sufficient permanent academic staff conferred certain strengths. For instance, an adequately sized course team could keep its shape as a group even when some course team members were absent from its meetings. And there would be more people around when the unexpected situations happened. This was because the permanent academic staff could contribute more based on their bonds with the University. It was felt that the academics coming from outside of the University were not suitable for taking more responsibilities because they came only for 'one-off' assignments.

'I would have liked a larger team because that gives me a little more slack in the system to cope with emergencies, contingencies. ... I think that more central writers would be helpful. ... We've got lots of consultants from outside of the OU. ... It's risky because people ... obviously haven't got the commitment that someone here has. ... Bit of it could go wrong and have to be rescued from inside.' (Rita)

Although it was seen as preferable to have more permanent academic staff in course teams, it was unrealistic for a permanent academic staff to work exclusively on one course team. The reason was that permanent academic staff commonly have a range of commitments, each with their own time demands.

'Another problem is, we were a small team, we've each got other commitments, too. ... So, I suppose I'd have rather had a team who were just doing this, or a bigger team who had some other commitments amongst them as well.' (Rita)

The commitments of a permanent academic staff included the work in other course teams, the involvement in research, administrative responsibilities, the supervision of postgraduate students and so on. These limited their input to a single course team. Under such circumstances, their contribution to a particular course team was reduced.

The interviewees further linked the issue of the size of course teams with the amount of comments produced for course development. The comments from course team members might not be enough if course teams were very small. This was because the courses of the UKOU were developed based on the working pattern that course team members

continuously commented on each other's work. For small course teams, the constructive comments on the courses would not be sufficient.

'That [i.e., A small course team] does mean it is difficult to get continuity of the judgement. ... I suspect, that [i.e., less comments] may be the case, yes. I mean it's like my general worry, you know. ... I think, we may be possibly a little below the critical mass, below the threshold of really being able to evaluate thoroughly.' (Arthur)

Not only was the importance of the amount of the comments made by academic course team members an issue, but also that the academic background of academic course team members should be considered. In a small course team, there might just be a single voice from academics that all come from the same discipline. It was difficult for this type of course teams to provide students with multiple perspectives regarding a single issue included in courses. However, it might be possible for a big course team to have academic course team members from different disciplines. Academic course team members coming from different academic origins could make a course much broader and richer. For a course that covered wide areas of knowledge and practices, this kind of multiple perspectives might be needed.

'Different minds, different ideas between people. There were people from different schools of thought. They saw the world in different ways. So the tension ... The backgrounds of the people are rather different. Their notions and ideas about what the content should consist of varied. I think it's a difficult one.' (Rosa)

'Too few people. I think that it's perhaps an unbalanced team. There are not enough people with different interests. ... I think that it would be better if it wasn't entirely [the view from Discipline Y].' (Douglas)

It was also pointed out that it was better to have enough comments in the initial stage of course development than to have criticisms in the late stage. In other words, it was felt that the early criticism from the course team itself was more useful than the one raised in the late stage of course development. This is because the comments raised in the initial stage mainly come from people in course teams. Since the work of course teams was still in the early stage, it was possible for course authors to include the criticisms into their writing although criticisms could be difficult to cope with at any time. The criticisms raised in later stages were, for example, aimed at the writing in final drafts. It might be

difficult for course teams to modify the drafted materials based on the recommendations at such a late stage.

‘Yes, [in a bigger course team, we might receive more criticisms that make us uncomfortable. But] it might be constructive. It’s better than not having criticism now, and then when it comes to the second or third draft having people commenting for the first time; and then it’s too late to do anything about it or getting too late to be doing about it.’ (Douglas)

To sum up, section 5.3.1 discusses the size of course teams. It shows that no matter how many people have really worked for course teams, the interviewees only use their perceptions to describe the size of their teams. All their perceptions are the same. That is their course teams are small. This is because they prefer to have a course team with more permanent academic staff in it. They believe that the permanent academic staff could provide more input to their courses. Should an emergency arise, it would be easier for the permanent academic staff in the course team than for the academics from outside of the University to rescue the course. The other advantage of having a big course team is that the considerable useful comments can be produced. Particularly, comments given in the early stage of course development are useful. This view suggests that the early criticisms are more useful than the comments targeting at the writing in final drafts. Additionally, it is preferred that the academic course team members coming from different academic roots can make courses -- particularly covering wide scope of knowledge and practices -- broader, richer and more balanced. A small course team might only get a single voice from academics that all come from the same discipline. Although a bigger course team with sufficient academic course team members who are the permanent staff is preferred, academic staff unlikely only work for one course team and they have other types of work to do (e.g., research and supervision). All these reduce the contribution of permanent academic staff to their course teams. This situation is compounded by the absence of permanent academic staff from course team meetings. The reasons for their absence vary. Sometime they are not present in course team meetings without explanation. Under the circumstances, course teams become smaller.

5.3.2 Involvement of the permanent academic staff in course teams

The above report shows that the number of permanent academic staff is the main concern for the interviewees regarding the size of their course teams. In this study, the permanent academic staff of the UKOU can be divided into the following two sets.

- The permanent academic staff in the School of Education
- The permanent academic staff in other parts of the University

Why do the course teams include academics who are the permanent staff? It is a common assumption in the School of Education that a permanent academic staff of the School is obliged to work on courses run by the School. And the School believes that the permanent academic staff can comparatively provide much more useful input and develop a course over time. A course proposal should therefore include a certain number of names of permanent academic staff. If there are not enough permanent academic staff listed in a course proposal, it is more difficult for the proposal to be approved by the School.

‘You have to have four internal full-time staff listed in the members of course team to let the School allow the proposal to go ahead. If you haven’t got four people, then it wouldn’t go ahead. Because they experienced that then you wouldn’t get enough support to actually make it.’ (Catherine, the course team chairperson of Course 1)

Although the School made such a rule, the permanent academic staff explained their involvement in their course teams by giving their own reasons. One reason was that he/she was interested in the course. There were various kinds of interest. The interest to play a particular role in a course team was one kind. For instance, the course team chairperson of Course 2 said his involvement was derived from his interest in taking the role as a course team chairperson. This was because he still lacked the experience of chairing a course team from the very beginning of the life of a course team.

‘And as I’ve been around the OU for a long time, and have never chaired a course at the beginning before, I was interested in this development team. I chaired maintenance teams before. But I never chaired a course from the beginning. So, I was interested to do that.’ (Leo, the course team chairperson of Course 2)

The above implies that the previous experience of working in a course team affected the involvement of a permanent academic staff in a course team. In this case, it was the lack of the experience of being a chairperson of a development course team that motivated him to work on Course 2.

Furthermore, the personal interest in a specific issue could provoke the involvement in a course team. For example, an academic staff who was an academic course team member of Course 2 said that his involvement in the course team was based on his personal interest in a specific issue. (see below)

‘I am very interested in Europe in general for many reasons. This has nothing to do with “education” at all. ... This is purely a personal thing.’ (Arthur, a course author of Course 2)

For an experienced permanent academic staff, a reason why he/she worked for a particular course team could be that he/she used to be the course team member of a predecessor course. Since he/she had already been involved in the work of predecessor course before, he/she naturally stayed in the successor course team.

‘I was on the original course team of Course 2P ... when I was invited to come on to this course.’ (Douglas, a course author of Course 2)

‘To an extent, some of the old course team members are the members of the new course team. I myself was a member of the old course team. Vincent was the chair of the old course team. Douglas was a member of the old course team. Hugh wasn’t a member of the central course team but he wrote a unit for the old course. We may involve other people who were members of the old course team or at least others who wrote units for the old course ... we may involve them at later stages of their own agreement.’ (Leo)

The other reason was merely that his/her post was located in the Centre that administers the course. The staff in the Centre were the main resources of course team members. For grouping academics into a course team, the course team chairperson and the director of the Centre often firstly looked at the academic staff in the Centre and considered if their colleagues could work for the course. They were thus the key people who actually organised the course teams.

'In our case, the course team members, we haven't got much choice because they are members of our centre, basically.' (Rita, the course team chairperson of Course 3)

'Initially we just start with who's in the Centre...' (Louis, a course author of Course 3 and the director of Centre 3)

'The head of the Centre decided it. Hugh [i.e., the director of Centre 2] suggested that I chaired the course...' (Leo)

The suggestion or decision of locating a particular academic staff into a course team was made in the light of various considerations. For example, they looked at the arrangement of work in the Centre, the working experiences of academic staff, the career development of academic staff and so on.

'I mean, I think, being the Centre Director, I obviously have quite an influence on proposing who should be the course team chair. It was my proposal that Rita should be the course team chair. Partly I think, because her work was such that she'd be free at the right time, which obviously I wouldn't be because I'm working on the MA module. And partly because I think she's a very well organised person who hasn't had the opportunity to do that kind of job before. So it seemed appropriate to give her that opportunity. It's a mixture of career opportunity availability and so on.' (Louis)

There was another situation. It was that a permanent academic staff of the School had no other suitable work to do in that particular time except that of joining this particular course team. Since he/she was already employed, he/she needed to be provided with work. Under the circumstances, to develop the particular course was thus allocated to him/her.

'Well, when we were planning my work in this year, it was not clear that there was any work in Centre 1 for me to do because there were no courses being constructed. So it was decided that I would go back to work on this general course.' (Douglas)

'In the case of Raymond [i.e., an academic course team member of Course 2], I think this was probably the only course being prepared at this moment that he could work on, that he had the knowledge and expertise to work on.' (Leo)

The above indicated that a permanent academic staff sometimes had no other work to do but was involved in a particular course team. This was why the course team chairperson

of Course 2 believed that his course team was grouped by people who either had interests in the course or had no other commitments. (see below)

‘This course team is made up really of people who are interested in working on the course and have nothing else to do, to put it like that, and have no prior commitments. People who are not working on something more specialised, for example.’ (Leo)

Regarding a new academic staff at the School, staff were sometimes recruited based on the needs of having an extra academic to develop a course. For instance, one academic course team member of Course 1 uttered that he was recruited at the time that the School needed someone to work on Course 1. The other academic course team member also mentioned this situation.

‘I was actually appointed on the basis that I would contribute to this course.’ (Paul, a course author of Course 1)

‘The problem is that it’s difficult to identify people from the existing staff to run a particular course. Once they finish a course they take their study leave and catch their holidays. So they tend to be unavailable. That’s the reason why they have to take new people.’ (Douglas, a course author of Course 1)

The above delineation showed that there were various ad hoc reasons to explain why a permanent academic staff joined a course team. The suitability of the selection criteria for members of the course team was thus questioned.

‘Course teams are made up and the chairs are chosen in all sort of ad hoc ways. There is no regular systematic way of doing it.’ (Leo)

‘People haven’t chosen an ideal course team. They only simply only think of people who are available.’ (Douglas, a course author of Course 1)

In addition to the analysis of the reasons why a permanent academic staff joined a course team, the collected data also contained the reasons why a permanent academic staff did not want to be involved in a course team.

Lack of interest was often a reason. For instance, the course team chairperson of Course 1 mentioned that the reason why the course team chairperson of predecessor Course 1P

did not continue to chair the successor team was that he had no interest in doing it anymore.

'He [i.e., the chairperson of the predecessor course team] did not wish to chair this new course. He has been a member of this course team and has written various course materials. But he never wanted to chair the new course. He's interested in ... And he didn't want to take that leadership role.' (Catherine)

The other academic staff who used to be the course team chairperson of Course 1P for a while also uttered that he had no intention to chair the successor course.

'I chaired Course 1P for a short time. But I wasn't really interested at that time in chairing a new course.' (Douglas, a course author of Course 1)

Why did a permanent academic staff lack interest in working on a course? One reason was that there was alternative work for him/her to undertake.

One aspect of other work was the development of other courses. For example, an explanation to the small size of Course 2 compared with the predecessor Course 2P was that some academic staff of Course 2P who specialised in Discipline U did not continue to stay in Course 2. Instead, they worked on other courses that were really in their own specific academic area.

'One of the reasons that they [i.e., people from the group of Discipline U] disappeared and that we [i.e., people from the group of Discipline Y] don't is that there are specialist courses in Discipline U that they worked on ...' (Leo)

Another reason was the intention to spend more time on conducting research, rather than on course development. For example, an academic staff who used to chair the predecessor Course 2P did not want to play the role as a course team chairperson in successor Course 2. This was because he wanted to work more on his research, not on the course development.

'I don't think he [i.e., the course team chairperson of the predecessor Course 2P] was interested in chairing the new course. He has gone on to do other things. ... He is at the moment heavily involved in research.' (Leo)

Furthermore, an academic who used to work for the predecessor course might have no involvement in the successor course due to his/her departure from the School. The situation could be that he/she moved out to either the other faculty, university or country.

‘The people who mainly worked on that have left. One had left the UK. And the other one had gone to another university.’ (Douglas, a course author of Course 2)

‘Sam has not only left the University but left the Country ... Fergus has not left the University but he’s left the School and is now in School W. He doesn’t get the time and I don’t think he’s interested in writing the new unit.’ (Leo)

To sum up, various reasons can explain why a permanent academic staff does not work in a particular course team. Working on other courses is a reason. Concentrating on conducting other kinds of work, e.g., research, is another situation. And it is sometimes merely because that he/she has already shifted his/her post to the other faculty/university/country. In general, they are either unavailable or have no interest in developing the courses.

Regarding an academic course team member coming from other parts of the University, we can find an example in Course 1.

‘My understanding is that as the new course proposal has been developed, there was always an assumption that Catherine will be the course team chair. That has been arranged from the start.’ (Paul)

‘The reason why I was in this position was that I have written for the Diploma ... for the School. ... I worked very closely with all of their work. That’s why I was so involved in their work. ... But it also needed a strong support of a person to be the chair to lead it. ... It always comes about through somebody saying, “I think we should do this and I am going to take a major responsibility.” ... So it was important that I was interested in chairing this new course, and to say “I will do that for the next two or three years that’s when my time would be.”’ (Catherine)

The above tells that the reason why Catherine joins the course team administered by the School, not her own institute, is that she has got a pleasant experience of working with the School before. Also, Course 1 is very close to her interest. Nevertheless, her willingness is most important.

To sum up, section 5.3.2 reports the involvement of permanent academic staff in course teams. Regarding the academic course team members who are the permanent academic staff in the School of Education, the School requires its academic staff to take the duty of working on course development in course teams. For this, the course teams of the School should include a certain number of permanent academic staff.

Although the School already provides rules to form a course team, the permanent academic staff still give various reasons to explain why they are involved in course team work. A reason is that he/she is interested in the course. The interest can be the one to take a particular role in course team or the specific personal interest in a particular issue. For an experienced permanent academic staff, his/her involvement in a certain course can be derived from his/her working experience in predecessor course. Or, the reason can simply be that his/her post is located in the Centre that administers the course. Even, his/her involvement in a course team is merely because he/she has no other suitable work to do in that particular time. For a new permanent academic staff, his/her employment can be directly connected with the development of a particular course.

Regarding the reasons why permanent academic staff do not join a particular course team, lack of interest is a common excuse. The absence of interest in developing a particular course is derived from, for instance, their involvement in other courses and the concentration on conducting research. Being unavailable is the other reason. Since some academics move out of the School to other faculty/university/country, they don't want or they cannot work for the course teams.

With respect to the academic course team members who are from other parts of the University, a reason for this kind of involvement is that the course is close to his/her academic interest. Or, the course is related to his/her prior working experience with the School. Nevertheless, the willingness is very important for this kind of involvement.

After understanding how the course teams are organised, the rest of the chapter centres on the arrangement of course team work. The first focus is the distribution of responsibility in a course team, which is discussed in next section.

5.4 Distribution of responsibility in a course team

People in course teams have taken responsibility for constructing courses. It is the common assumption that the responsibility of an academic course team member is to produce course materials. However, what is the actual situation of the distribution of responsibility, say, to the course team members who are the permanent academic staff of the University? This section reports the story.

The data of this study show that Course 2 has possessed certain features of the distribution of responsibility. Course 2 are thus the prime concern of this section. Since Course 2 was in the early stage of course development when the interviews were conducted, this report focuses on the distribution of the early tasks to the course team members who are the permanent academic staff.

The distribution of responsibility connects with the demarcation of responsibility. Are there clear margins in the responsibility among the course team members who are the permanent academic staff of the University? The data tell that this relates to how they feel. A perception is that the boundary of responsibility is obscure. For example, an academic course team member of Course 2 uttered that in his view the lines of responsibility in his course team were blurred.

‘ So, I am afraid, it’s all rather informal, blurred and few lines of demarcation. ... those are the responsibilities of a block co-ordinator. They are fairly *ad hoc*. I don’t think it’s a good idea to have a very sort of formal structure. There are so few people, even in the course team as a whole; let alone in the block, block team as it where.’ (Arthur, a course author of Course 2)

Why did the boundaries of responsibility become blurred? One reason was that the whole tasks were allocated stage by stage. Since the course team started its work of course development by distributing the tasks which would either be conducted soon or could be foreseen in advance, there were always some other tasks coming in the later stages of course development. The other reason was that there were always some unanticipated tasks that needed to be sorted out promptly. Under the circumstances, the responsibility

of a permanent academic staff in the course team was difficult to be rigidly pre-framed and be kept without having adjustments later on. The boundary of his/her responsibility thus became changeable.

‘One of the things, really, is that you can’t find somebody else to do it, you have to do it yourself.’ (Arthur)

‘You end being on a course team doing everything. You look around, you see there are only a few people, and you have to divide all the things between you. Or you have outside people who help to do things. So, Mac, Leo and Raymond are doing...’ (Grace, the course manager of Course 2)

The adjustment of responsibility could be linked with the small number of permanent staff in the course team. It was likely the case that the course team members in a small course team extended the original territory of their responsibility in order to cope with various new situations.

Therefore, a course team member who was the permanent academic staff of the University might conduct some tasks that are different, to some extent, from the ones under the narrow definition of his/her role. For example, the course manager of Course 2 became one of the main contributors to a resource book together with the chairperson of the course team.

‘Leo [i.e., the course team chairperson] is doing “... Book” together with me [i.e., the course manager].’ (Grace)

When the margin of the responsibility of a permanent academic staff in the course team was not clear, guessing could happen. For instance, a course author of Course 2 wondered whether he would work on the second TV programme for the course team or not. He also suspected that a particular task would be allocated to him.

‘I suspect I won’t be involved in the second TV programme ... I don’t know who is going to be doing that. Probably, Douglas, but I don’t know. I may not have the time myself, I’m not sure.’ (Arthur)

‘Unit G, we found an external consultant. ... I imagine it will be me who keeps in touch with him on both administrative and academic matters that need clarifying.’ (Arthur)

This implied that uncertainty, particularly towards the future work, existed. In other words, it was not clear sometimes to whom a task would be allocated.

‘I don’t know who will end up co-ordinating Blocks X and Z.’ (Grace)

Furthermore, there might be a compromise. This meant that the final decision on the allocation of a task might not be ideal. This was because that only a limited number of permanent academic staff were in the course team and the personal strength of a particular team member sometimes did not exactly match the requirement of a particular task.

‘That [i.e., Arthur becoming the block co-ordinator of Block Q] was an accident... Hugh was the co-ordinator, originally. ... He also has knowledge about the area. But he is not always very good at co-ordinating. So what do we do? There is no one else.’ (Grace)

Tasks were not always passively distributed to course team members. Course team members sometimes expressed their intentions of carrying out certain tasks before the tasks were allocated. This meant that the volunteer asked to carry out certain tasks. For example, an academic course team member of Course 2 mentioned that he volunteered to become a block co-ordinator.

‘Well, I volunteered after a while... Because there was nobody else, I mean, you know.’ (Arthur)

To conduct a task voluntarily showed a kind of personal character. People around the volunteer could feel the character. This was because that the intention of being a volunteer was quite strong.

‘Because Arthur pushed and pushed and pushed.’ (Grace)

How to explain these features? They could be understood by linking with the operation of the course team. It was felt that a democratic course team could enhance these features. For example, the course manager of Course 2 stated that her course team was a democratic organisation and that the margin of her responsibility was vague.

'We are in a very democratic organisation here. It doesn't say on my job description "you must not do this, this, this, this, and this." It's a very vague job description...' (Grace)

To sum up, section 5.4 highlights, in the early stage of course development, an unclear distribution of responsibility of those course team members who are permanently employed by the University. This couples with the extended territory of their roles, guesswork, uncertainty, compromise and voluntary status. One reason is that the whole tasks are distributed stage by stage. So, the permanent academic staff in the course team in the early stage of course development are not absolutely sure about their overall responsibility within the whole project. The other reason is that there is only a small number of permanent academic staff in the course team and they are considered to be the ones who can cope with all the 'one-off' situations. Consequently, the boundary of their responsibility in the course team becomes extended. On the whole, since it is human beings that distribute the responsibility, the scope of the responsibility of course team members who are the permanent staff can always be adjusted if there is a need.

The above is the delineation of the distribution of responsibility to course team members who are the permanent academic staff of the University. Not only this feature, the data also show the following feature: the interpersonal relationships of course team members who are the permanent academic staff of the University. The report is presented below.

5.5 Interpersonal relationships in a course team

Is the work of a course team affected by the interpersonal relationships of course team members, particularly amongst those who are the permanent academic staff of the University? The observation of course team members can provide the answer. This section addresses this issue with particular reference to Course 2.

As mentioned previously, a number of course team members relate to each other as colleagues either in the same Centre of the School, in the School or at the University. As

a result of various activities and events arising on campus, some course team members knew other members before the project began. Some course team members already had the experience of working together before.

'To an extent, some of the old course team members are the members of the new course team... In most cases, we would like the old authors to write the units.' (Leo, the course team chairperson of Course 2)

'I've already known all these people for many years... and I have been here for twenty years. We've got used to each other.' (Douglas, a course author of Course 2)

With the experience, course team members already got the pictures of other's professional ability and the approach to work. If there was a long-term working relationship, they could even have a deep understanding of personality traits. Thus, some course team members knew each other very well.

This kind of situation had merits and weaknesses. A perception was that with the mutual understanding of course team members that were built by conducting other tasks previously, a particular course team that just began to develop the course could save its time on preliminary discussion. A peaceful group climate could be felt. Things seemed to work out smoothly. Decisions were made comparatively faster in course team meetings. And the formal procedures of doing things were sometimes not needed.

'Advantage is that people can usually work smoothly together.' (Leo)

'It's quite sort of harmonious atmosphere. We do know each other pretty well based on the pretty long experience. It's particularly true of Leo, Grace and myself. We all worked on Course XP. Leo and I in addition worked on Course WP that was the predecessor of Course XP -- it was the work going in the mid-seventies. I haven't worked so continually with Douglas; but I have worked with him a period of time -- Course VP, which was made in the year 1970s. Raymond, I don't know so well. But, I have seen a fair amount of him over several years... So, on the whole, we know each other pretty well, which means usually we don't need formal structures and so on. ... Because most of us have been here for quite a long time, we know the sort of approach people will take. We know the sort of approach they will take to other people. For example, Douglas, who's an old colleague of Freddy, will have quite an acute idea of the sort of interaction between Freddy and me.' (Arthur, a course author of Course 2)

But, the accumulated mutual understanding of course team members before a particular course team started its work could also mean that course team members no longer strove to change the opinions of their colleagues. This was because that they, based on their experience of working together before, knew that certain things done by certain course team members were unlikely to be changed. The resultant decreased intellectual debate could undermine the quality of the course.

‘Disadvantage is that there’s lack real intellectual dialogue and less intellectual cross-fertilisation of ideas than there would be with people who are new to one another.’ (Leo)

‘Remember that most of the people working on the course have been working together for many years, so they know one another’s characteristics, know one another’s ways of thought and ways of writing. To take one example, I’ve been working with Vincent for nearly twenty years. So, I know the kind of material he produces; he knows the kinds of material I produce. I like some things about his material; and I don’t like other things. We don’t revive old arguments every time. So things we argued about in the 1970s, and a little bit less in the 1980s; we don’t argue at all about now a days. We know where the other person stands. We know how much and how little chance that we have of persuading other people.’ (Leo)

To sum up, the course team members of Course 2 who are the permanent academic staff of the University feel that the long-term relationship of course team members implicitly affect course team work. On the one hand, it increases the speed of making decisions. It creates a harmonious group climate. And certain formal procedures can be avoided. On the other hand, it reduces the amount of intellectual interchange that is needed for raising the quality of the course. Less intellectual cross-fertilisation of ideas in course team meetings owing to the long-term relationship of course team members is an inherent disadvantage.

5.6 Features of the formation of course teams

This chapter investigates the formation of course teams focusing on four concerns.

Section 5.2 tells how a course team is born. Section 5.3 shows how the course teams are organised. Section 5.4 is about the distribution of responsibility in a course team. Section

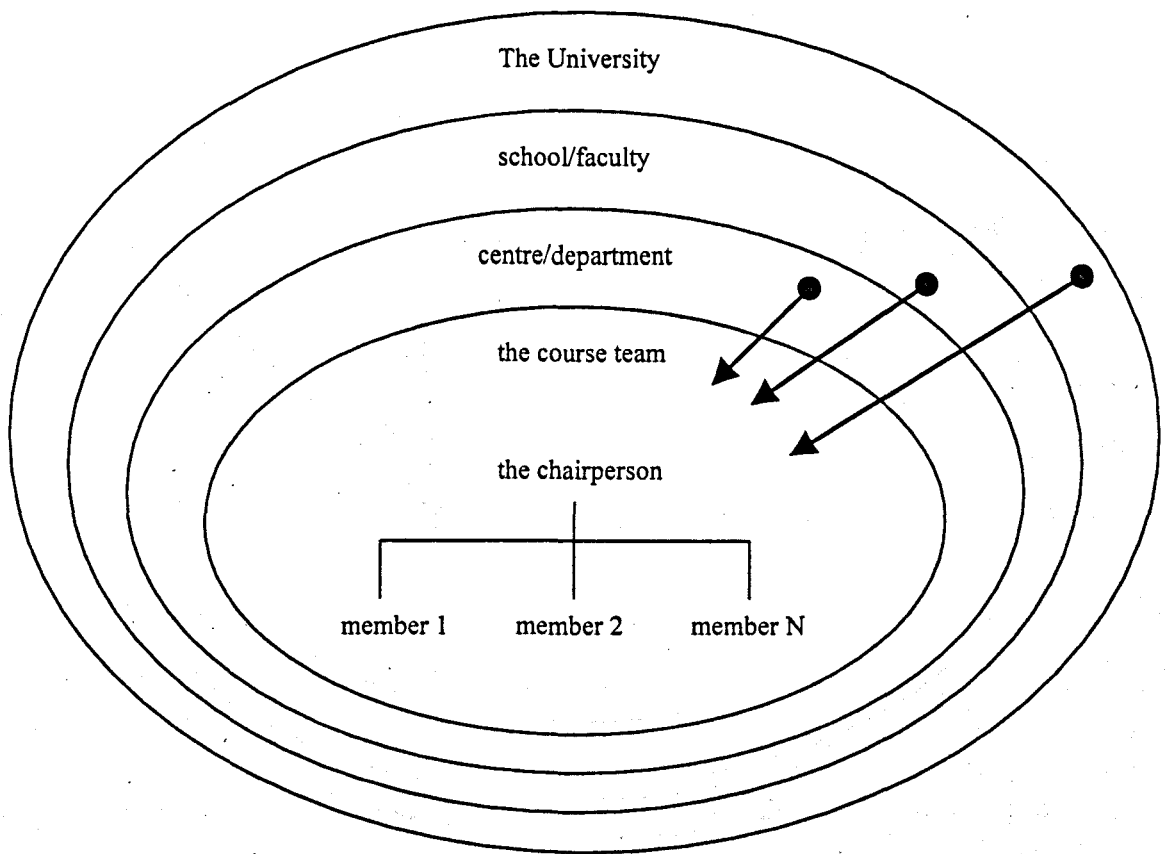
5.5 describes the interpersonal relationships in a course team. After the data are analysed, the following four features of the formation of course teams are identified.

- The birth of a course team is regulated by the protocol of course approval and is derived from the effort of individual members of staff.
- Academic's personal attributes form a basis of the organisation of course teams.
- The distribution of responsibility in a course team is featured by the vaguely demarcated responsibility of core course team members who are the permanent academic staff.
- The course team members' experience of working together underlies their current work in course teams.

These four features are detected by analysing the interview data collected from the fieldwork. They are explained in details below. To verify them, they are compared with the data collected in post-fieldwork interview.

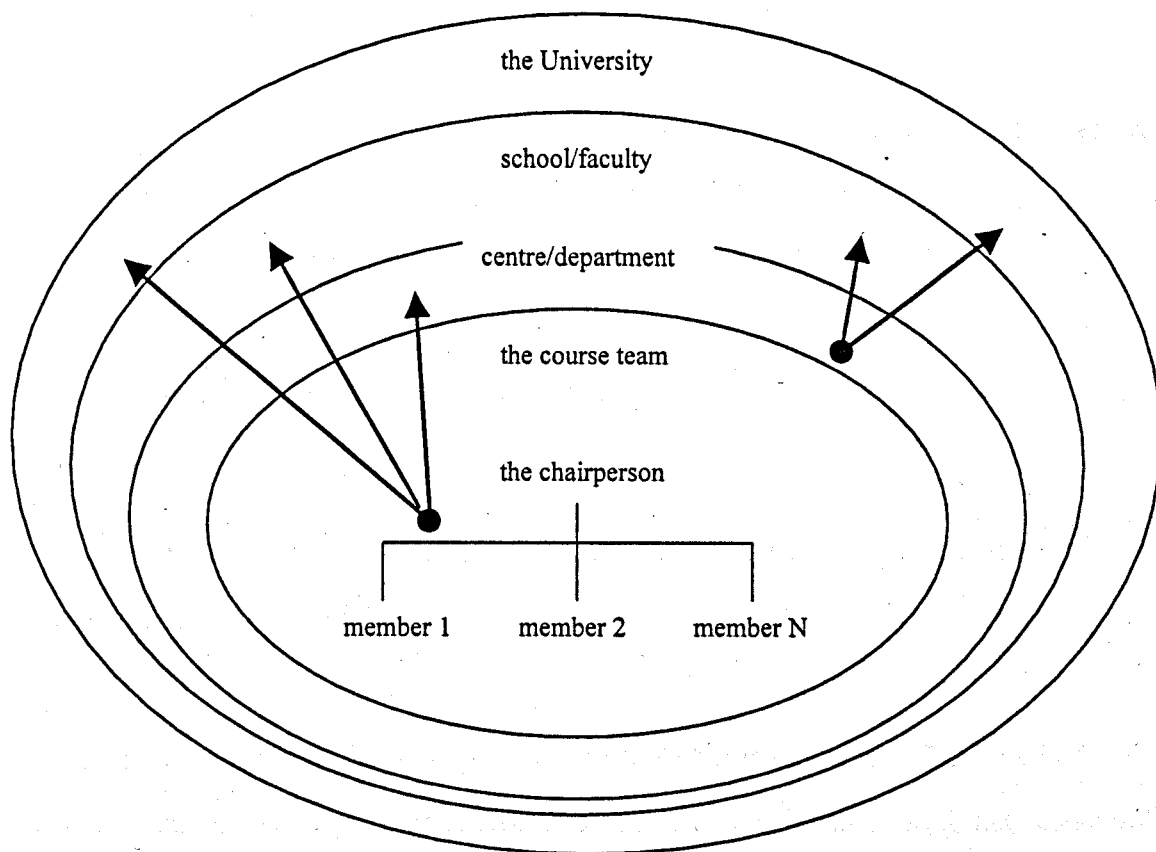
5.6.1 Birth of a course team: Regulated by the protocol of course approval and derived from the effort of individual members of staff

In section 5.2, we have seen how a course team is formally approved. Not only the University but also the School already sets up a protocol of course approval. The protocol has been developed years and years after the University/School was established. The birth of a course team is only officially recognised after the course proposal is accepted by authority-bodies in the School and the University. This is the particular feature of the birth of a course team. In the section, we have seen the bureaucracy of the University/School that rules the formations of a course team. Through the process of getting approvals, a course team becomes institutionalised. This top-down pattern of giving birth to a course team is illustrated in figure 5-1.



[Figure 5- 1] Top-Down Pattern of Giving Birth to a Course Team

However, without the considerable effort from individual members of staff, a course team cannot be born. It can be seen from previous sections that individual members of staff initiate the idea of offering the course. A member of staff is willing to take the role as the chairperson of the course team and to produce the course proposal. Since then, the supposed chairperson does what he/she can to make the course proposal go through all the procedures of course approval. In addition to the supposed course team chairperson, the director of the Centre also works hard on the birth of a course team. This can be called a 'bottom-up' pattern (see figure 5-2).



[Figure 5- 2] Bottom-Up Pattern of Giving Birth to a Course Team

Can this feature be found in other course teams? In post-fieldwork interview, a course team member of Course 4Z in Faculty Z pointed out that her course was developed by following the University's schedule. She was asked by the head of her department to take the role as the course team chairperson. (see below)

'In order to get approval for the course, you need to start earlier. There's a timetable built into the system. ... The course team started working in the beginning of 1993, two years before the course was firstly presented in February 1995. ... We started handing over materials, I suppose, about April 1994. So the first unit goes out, to the editor first, and then the second unit, and so on.' (Lucia, the course team chair of Course 4Z in Faculty Z)

'The head of department was looking around for somebody to take on Course 4Z. .. Well, I felt I was rather bullied into being the course team chair. ... The pressures was very strong and I found it was very hard to resist.' (Lucia)

Course 4Z in Faculty Z started to process the course approval about two years before the course was firstly presented. The head of department approached Lucia to chair the

course team of Course 4Z. These features concern with the findings in the Education courses studied.

To sum up, a course team is born by combining the exertion of authority and the effort from individual members of staff. This means that the birth of a course team is not only controlled by administrative units from the top but also pushed by individual members of staff from bottom. Thus, to give birth to a course team, both the powers of organisation and of individual members of staff are important.

5.6.2 Academic's personal attributes: A basis of the organisation of course teams

From the delineation of the perception of the size of course teams and the methods of grouping the permanent academic staff into course teams, it can be said that academic's personal attributes form the basis of the organisation of course teams. This means that the personal feelings, perceptions, intentions, backgrounds and lives of academic course team members consist of a key of the organisation of course teams.

With respect to the size of course teams, the course team members who are the permanent academic staff address more what they perceive the size rather than the actual number of course team members. In their perception, their course teams are small regardless of the total number of people actually engaged in the project. This perception is derived from the feeling that there are insufficient permanent academic staff in course teams. Furthermore, the course teams can become even smaller if some members are absent from course team meetings for various reasons. It is thus felt that the small number of permanent academic staff in course teams might affect the work of course teams.

It is also evident that the personal attributes of course team members who are permanent academic staff of either the School or the other parts of the University construct a platform for forming a course team. All of their interest, prior experiences, places of their

employment, personal circumstances, other commitments, or re-locations from the School to another faculty/university/country and so on affect the grouping of course teams. This is because a course team is comprised of human beings and is organised by them.

Can this feature be found out from another course team? In post-fieldwork interview, it was told that the reason why Lucia was asked to be the chair of the course team of Course 4Z was because she was available and because she got a good record of doing things. Moreover, she herself wanted to add the experience of chairing a course team to her career. (see below)

‘The head of department came to me and said he would like me to do it because he didn’t think there was anybody else available to do it. I wasn’t very happy about that because it wasn’t really my sort of area. But the reason he asked me to do it was that I have a good record for getting stuff done without too much trouble and I can keep a lot of diaries reliable. ... I haven’t chaired a new course before. ... I’ve done presentation. ... I’ve been around the University for a very long time. ... I knew I could do the chairing bit. ...’ (Lucia)

‘There was nobody else available. It was very clear that there was nobody else in the department who was either able or willing to be involved. ... so I had to take how ever volunteered. And there was only those three other people who volunteered. ... If somebody volunteers, it’s actually very hard to say “no, I don’t want you”, especially if you are very short of people who might be available.’ (Lucia)

‘We asked somebody who did know more about the area of the course and also in the department and who’d been a member of the original course team. ... We actually wanted him to be like the course team researcher because we knew he wasn’t very good at writing. ... But he didn’t want to do that; he wanted to write as well. We agreed to that. ... The fourth person said that she would like to be involved. Although she didn’t know anything about the area of the course she thought she’d just joined the department and she felt that would be a good way for her to learn more about the area.’ (Lucia)

The above quotations also showed that the availability of staff members was a key criterion to the organisation of the course team of Course 4Z. Since there were not many available academic staff in Faculty Z, the course team of Course 4Z was not organised in an ideal way. For instance, Lucia had to accept volunteers to be the course team members of her team. A course team member was thought to have less writing ability although he had the knowledge of the area. The other course team member had less experience and

intended to learn more about the area by joining the course team. It is apparent that the above-mentioned feature of the course team of Course 4Z fits with this finding.

5.6.3 Distribution of responsibility in a course team: Featured by the vaguely demarcated responsibility of core course team members who are the permanent academic staff

From the sketch of the distribution of responsibility in a course team (see section 5.4), it is apparent that in the mind of permanent academic staff their responsibility is vaguely demarcated. This can be seen from the investigation into both the amount of tasks and the people who take the responsibility.

Regarding the amount of tasks, this relates to the University's system demands on the course team. In Chapter 4, it is already reported that considerable tasks for developing a course have already been identified by the University. All these tasks need to be conducted within a certain time scale. Since the whole tasks of course development are distributed stage by stage, the course team members who are the permanent academic staff of the University are forced to venture beyond the pre-fixed boundary of their roles by taking more work.

The distribution of responsibility in a course team also relates to what the course team itself is willing to undertake. This links closely with the capacity of individual course team member and his/her personality. One explanation regarding the vaguely demarcated responsibility of course team members is that the permanent academic staff have stronger attachment to their courses. If there is a need, they have to extend the territory of their responsibility in course teams in order to create the course on time.

Can this feature be found out in another course team? Here is an example from the course team of Course 4Z in Faculty Z.

'I think in retrospect, we really needed six people. ... I didn't really realise in advance just how much one of these people could not write and so that involved a lot of extra work for me. ... There were lots of additional work

that came to me ... because there was this one person who couldn't write and two of the other people actually had outstanding commitments on other courses. Troy had a major commitment to a course in another faculty, which meant that though he thought he was free to work on Course 4Z in fact he found that he wasn't available to work on Course 4Z until quite late in 1993 so that meant it put further pressure on the course team. Vivian was very much involved with a course that she had just finished doing. And again although the actual amount of work she was required to do on that course was quite small, when it did come, it was a matter of urgency. And so that was quite disruptive for the work of Course 4Z.' (Lucia)

The above quotation tells that Lucia got some additional work to do in the course team of Course 4Z because a course team member could not write well and two other course team members were distracted by other courses. Under the circumstances, Lucia extended the margin of her job and undertook more responsibility. It is apparent that the situation in the course team of Course 4Z echoes the situation studied in the School of Education.

5.6.4 Course team members' experience of working together:

Underlying their current work in course teams

Regarding the relationships of course team members, section 5.5 shows that the course team members' experience of working together apparently underlies their current work in course teams. Having been colleagues within the School/University for a certain period of time, academics have come across various opportunities to know each other. By working together, the understanding of each other's ability, approach to tasks and their personality characteristics is developed.

Based on what they have experienced before, course team members in the end know what they can do and what they cannot do in current course teams. This situation illuminates course team member's characters and his/her interpersonal relationships with other course team members.

Can this feature be found in another course team? Here is the situation in the course team of Course 4Z in Faculty Z. (see below)

'I think, if Troy and I hadn't been friends already, we might have found it quite hard to work together. So that was important. ... the rest of us, ... if I had worked with some of the other before, I might have been more aware of what there strengths and weaknesses were.' (Lucia)

What Lucia meant in above quotation was that the previous working experience between a course team member and herself helped the work in the course team of Course 4Z. She hoped she also had worked with other course team members before. This was because the strengths and weaknesses of these people could be identified from previous working experience. Thus, it can be said that the above-mentioned situation in the course team of Course 4Z corresponds to the situation studied in the School of Education.

5.7 Summary of the findings

This chapter delineates the formation of course teams. There are four foci in this chapter: (1) the birth of a course team; (2) the organisation of course teams; (3) the distribution of responsibility in a course team; and (4) the interpersonal relationships in a course team. It is found out in this chapter that the formation of course teams possesses the following four features.

- The birth of a course team is regulated by the protocol of course approval and is derived from the effort of individual members of staff.
- Academic's personal attributes form a basis of the organisation of course teams.
- The distribution of responsibility in a course team is featured by the vaguely demarcated responsibility of core course team members who are the permanent academic staff.
- The course team members' experience of working together underlies their current work in course teams.

Chapter 6

Process of Working Together as a Team in Course Team Meetings

6.1 Introduction

It has already been mentioned in Chapter 3 that the course team meeting is the occasion when course team members get together to formally discuss both various issues and drafted writing. This highlights the importance of the investigation into course team meetings in order to get an improved understanding of course team work. This chapter therefore reports the process of working together as a team in course team meetings. The investigation contains the following two parts.

- Agendas of course team meetings
- Discussions in course team meetings

6.2 Agendas of course team meetings

To hold a course team meeting, the meeting agenda is usually prepared and distributed in advance to people who are invited to attend. Since the meeting agenda is the plan of the meeting, by analysing it an improved understanding of course team work should emerge.

Usually, several items are included in a meeting agenda. The agenda item represents the important issue that needs to be discussed in a course team meeting. What are the features of the agenda items that are investigated in this study? Analysis indicates that there are three types of agenda item. (see below)

- The academic agenda item
- The practical agenda item
- The neutral agenda item

The academic agenda item refers to subject-matter and pedagogy. Examples are ‘outline: Unit 1 in Block Q’ and ‘disability issues’. *The practical agenda item* is the one that concerns course management and course production. Examples include ‘report: TV1’ and ‘UCA5a revised budget’. *The neutral agenda item* is embraced in every meeting agenda, which has the function of either starting or ending a meeting. The following are the examples: ‘minutes of previous meeting’; ‘matters arising not covered elsewhere on the agenda’; ‘any other business’ and ‘the date of future meeting’. The meaning and examples of these three types of agenda items in the meeting agendas of course team meetings is presented in table 6-1.

[Table 6- 1] Types of Agenda Items in Meeting Agendas of Course Team Meetings

The Academic Agenda Item	The Practical Agenda Item	The Neutral Agenda Item
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Subject-matter• Pedagogy e.g., ‘Outline: Unit 1 in Block Q’; ‘Disability issues’	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Course management• Course production e.g., ‘Report: TV1’; ‘UCA5a revised budget’	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• To start the meeting• To end the meeting e.g., ‘Minutes of previous meeting’; ‘Matters arising not covered elsewhere on the agenda’; ‘Any other business’; ‘The date of future meeting’

How do these three types of agenda items compose the meeting agendas that are investigated in this research? Table 6-2 presents the analysis of the agenda items in 13 meeting agendas of course team meetings that are observed.

[Table 6- 2] Analysis of Agenda Items in Meeting Agendas of Course team Meetings

Agenda Item Meeting		The Academic Agenda Item	The Practical Agenda Item	The Neutral Agenda Item	[Total]
Course 2	Meeting no. 9	3 (30%)	3 (30%)	4 (40%)	10 (100%)
	Meeting no. 10	4 (40%)	3 (30%)	3 (30%)	10 (100%)
	Meeting no. 11	5 (42%)	4 (33%)	3 (25%)	12 (100%)
	Meeting no. 12	4 (40%)	3 (30%)	3 (30%)	10 (100%)
	Meeting no. 13	2 (22%)	3 (33%)	4 (44%)	9 (100%)
	Meeting no. 16	6 (55%)	2 (18%)	3 (27%)	11 (100%)
	Meeting no. 17	0 (0%)	5 (63%)	3 (38%)	8 (100%)
	Meeting no. 18	4 (36%)	3 (27%)	4 (36%)	11 (100%)
	[Total] 8 meetings	28 (35%)	26 (32%)	27 (33%)	81 (100%)
Course 3	Meeting no. 13	6 (46%)	2 (15%)	5 (38%)	13 (100%)
	Meeting no. 14	4 (29%)	5 (36%)	5 (36%)	14 (100%)
	Meeting no. 17	3 (33%)	2 (22%)	4 (44%)	9 (100%)
	Meeting no. 18	4 (36%)	3 (27%)	4 (36%)	11 (100%)
	Meeting no. 19	3 (30%)	2 (20%)	5 (50%)	10 (100%)
	[Total] 5 meetings	20 (35%)	14 (25%)	23 (40%)	57 (100%)
[Grand Total] 13 meetings		48 (35%)	40 (29%)	50 (36%)	138 (100%)
[Mean]		3.7	3.1	3.8	10.6

The talk in course team meetings and the concerns underlying the talk are grouped into three categories namely, the academic talk, practical talk and neutral talk.

The above table shows that the whole meeting agendas, in general, comprise 35 per cent of academic agenda items, 29 per cent of practical agenda items and 36 per cent of neutral agenda items. This indicates that the course teams plan to discuss not only the academic issues but also the practical issues. Further scrutiny of table 6-2 indicates that more academic than practical agenda items are included in nine meeting agendas.

Conversely, more practical than academic agenda items are embraced in three meeting

agendas and the table shows that one meeting agenda did not contain any academic agenda item at all.

To sum up, the course teams do intend to discuss various practical issues although there are more academic issues listed in meeting agendas. Therefore, the existence of practical agenda items in meeting agendas of course team meetings cannot be ignored.

Having analysed the content of meeting agendas, the next question addresses how people in course team meetings follow these meeting agendas. Do people in course team meetings provide the academic concern in discussing the academic agenda item? Do people in course team meetings provide the practical concern in discussing the practical agenda item? In order to get answers, further analysis of the workings of course team meetings is required. The following section provides the examples of actual course team work in course team meetings.

6.3 Discussions in course team meetings

People in course team meetings mainly talk. The meanings of their talk lead the development of discussions. Can the talk uttered in course team meetings be categorised by analysing the underlying concerns? This section studies the underlying meanings of utterance in actual course team meetings.

The talk in course team meeting and the concerns underlying the talk are grouped into two by the researcher, namely, the academic talk/concern and the practical talk/concern. (see table 6-3)

[Table 6- 3] Types of Talk/Concern in Course Team Meetings

• Academic talk/concern:	* Subject-matter * Pedagogy
• Practical talk/concern:	* Course management * Course production

Based on this, the discussions in course team meetings are analysed. The analysis of the observation data collected from course team meetings is presented by containing the 'thick description' (see section 3.4.4). Two sections of discussion which tackle two different types of agenda item in two course team meetings are selected. Example A is the discussion on an academic agenda item, i.e., about the shape of blocks. It lasted about forty minutes. Example B is the discussion on a practical agenda item, i.e., about publicising the course. It lasted about one hour and two minutes.

6.3.1 Example A

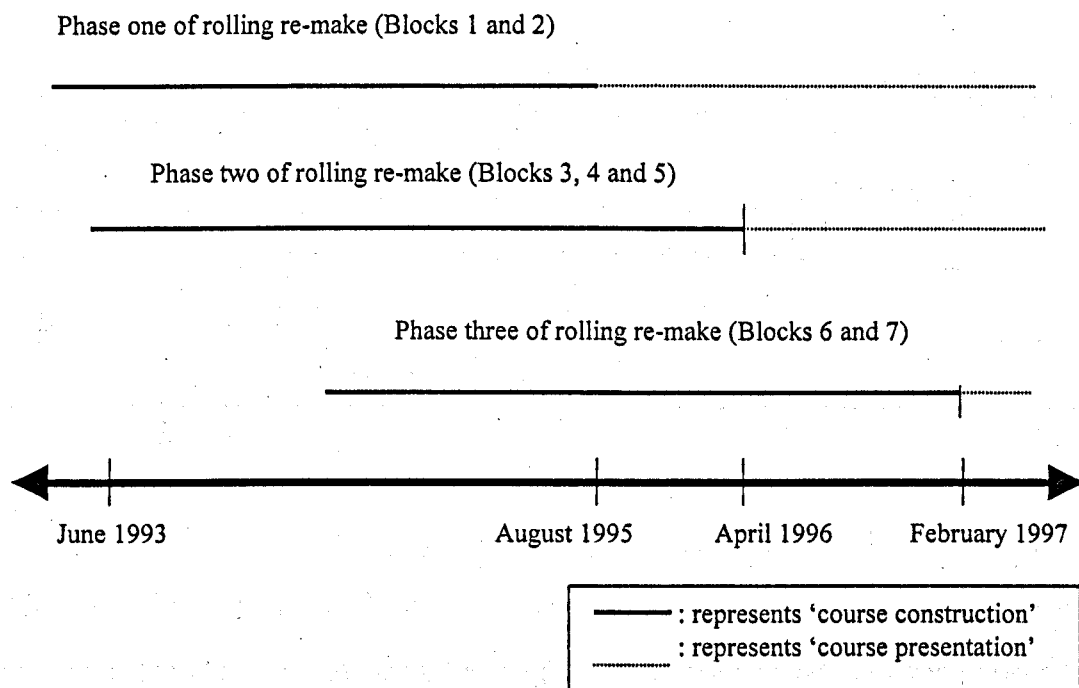
This is the discussion extracted from the talk in the 10th course team meeting of Course 2 on the 23rd of June 1993. To set the scene, the background of the example is introduced first. Afterwards, the whole discussion element is broken down into five parts that are summarised and analysed respectively.

Background of example A

The description of the background information of this example comprises the introduction of the course, the meeting, the meeting agenda, the participants of the meeting, the agenda item and the general sketch of the discussion.

The course: Course 2

Course 2 is a second level undergraduate course in the School of Education. It is constructed by the way of 'rolling re-make'. Rolling re-make means to re-make a course portion by portion while the course is still presented for a couple of years with an aim to become a completely new course in the end. In this case, Course 2 replaces its predecessor Course 2P in three stages while Course 2P is still offered to students. The course team plans that the course will become completely new after three stages of replacement in three years time. The three phases of rolling re-making the printed course units (planned before 23rd June, 1993) are illustrated in figure 6-1.



[Figure 6- 1] Whole Plan of Course 2 for Rolling Re-Make

To explain further, there are seven blocks of course units in the course, i.e., Blocks 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7. They are re-made in three periods of time. According to the plan (at the time of this course team meeting), both Blocks 1 and 2 are in the first phase of rolling re-make. They are then joined into the predecessor Course 2P and replace the old materials of the blocks. The partly renewed course is presented in August 1995 (i.e., about two years after this course team meeting). In the second phase of rolling re-make, Blocks 3, 4 and 5 are the centre of the work. These three renewed blocks are due to be presented in April 1996 (i.e., near three years after this course team meeting). Blocks 6 and 7 are in the third phase of rolling re-make. In the schedule, the first presentation of the new course is in February 1997 (i.e., about three and half years after this course team meeting). The whole course is planned to be completely new in 1997.

Around the time of this course team meeting (i.e., on 23 June 1993), the work in the first phase of rolling re-make has already started. The work in the second phase of rolling re-make is due to be discussed. Participants in course team meeting sometimes mention the third phase of rolling re-make at this stage.

Regarding the first phase of rolling re-make (planned before 23 June 1993), Block 1 of course units comprises three units; and Block 2 has four course units (see table 6-4).

[Table 6- 4] Plan of Course 2 for the Work in the First Phase of Rolling Re-Make

Blocks and Units in the First Phase of Rolling Re-Make		Plan (before 23 June 1993) of Course Development
Block 1	Unit 1	• To write the 2nd draft (the 1st draft is skipped)
	Unit 2	• To write the 2nd draft (the 1st draft is skipped)
	Unit 3	• To plan how to re-make the unit
Block 2	Unit 1	• To re-write the outline
	Unit 2	• To write the 1st draft
	Unit 3	• To write the 1st draft
	Unit 4	• To write the outline

It was planned before this course team meeting that the re-make on Units 1 and 2 of Block 1 would start directly from the second draft of writing since these two course units are assigned to the same author as the one in predecessor Course 2P. Around the time of the course team meeting, the re-make on Unit 3 of Block 1 was already being planned, i.e., a decision regarding the appointment of an author from outside of the University.

According to the plan, Block 2 in Course 2 was a completely new block dealing with a new issue, which was different from the one in the predecessor Course 2P. (Block 2 in Course 2P is 'the course review'.) Around the time of the course team meeting, Units 2 and 3 of Block 2 in Course 2 were being written as the first drafts; and Units 1 and 4 of Block 2 were still being re-written as outlines.

The meeting, the meeting agenda and the participants of the meeting

This meeting was the 10th course team meeting. The course team meeting usually took place every fortnight. Hence, the course team was in the early stage of course development, compared to Course 1 that had 46 course-team-meetings in total. In the previous course team meetings, the drafted course materials had not been discussed. Most discussions were about general aspects of the formation of the course.

The meeting agenda consisted of seven agenda items. They were: (1) minutes of the last meeting, (2) matters not arising elsewhere on the agenda, (3) matters to report (Readers;

TV programme; production issues), (4) block reports (Block 1, Block 2), (5) re-make for 1996: Blocks 3, 4 and 5, (6) date of next meeting and (7) any other business.

In total, there were six people including the researcher at meeting.

- Douglas: a course author; the chairperson of the meeting
- Arthur: a course author; the block co-ordinator of Block 2
- Hugh: a course author; the block co-ordinator of Block 1
- Grace: the course manager
- Mac: the editor
- Hung-Ju: the researcher of this study

As usual, these five course team members entered the room with the meeting agenda. They also brought both the meeting minutes of previous meeting and other personal items to the meeting. For this meeting, the course manager has prepared the following reference materials.

- The memo from Vincent (a course author, also a block co-ordinator)
- The structure of the predecessor Course 2P
- The drafted schedule
- The checklist of and the responses to relevant issues

Some of the above reference materials were given to participants together with the meeting agenda by the course manager before the meeting. Others were distributed in the meeting. Additionally, Arthur prepared the following reference material and distributed it directly to other course team members' offices in the morning before the meeting.

- The review of course materials in Block 4 of predecessor Course 2P

The above meeting was held from about eleven o'clock in the morning to half past two in the afternoon. It adjourned for about ten minutes so that participants could bring their lunch into the meeting. Altogether it lasted about three-and-half hours.

This meeting took place in Douglas's room that accommodated the office equipment to two staff members. Some chairs were moved in from other rooms for the meeting. Six

participants, including the researcher, closely sat face-to-face, roughly in a circle.

Nobody used the desks there. Since the reference materials were sometimes spread around on the floor during the meeting, participants sometimes had to leave their seats in order to check various papers.

The agenda item and the sketch of the discussion

The below is the agenda item.

‘Re-make for 1996: Blocks 3, 4 and 5 (rolling schedule attached)

Note: This is the first attempt to look at the shape of these blocks. We must have a UCA 1 completed before the summer’

It showed that this agenda item considered the shape of three blocks of course units in the second phase of rolling re-make. Since it was the first opportunity to discuss the shape of these blocks, the researcher expected that a range of academic concerns would be heard.

In the meeting, this agenda item (i.e., the fifth agenda item) had been moved ahead to be discussed earlier than the fourth agenda item. This discussion lasted about forty minutes, from around 12:33pm to 1:13pm.

In the interests of clarity of presentation of data, the whole discussion on this agenda item in the meeting has been broken down into five parts (A1 ~ A5) by the researcher. The first two breaking points are Mac’s utterance regarding his intention of leaving the meeting. The third part starts from the proposal for solving the encountered problem. The fourth part begins by the follow-up suggestion, i.e., to take the mentioned suggestion as the decision. The fifth part arises from a closing remark resulted in Mac expressing his wish to leave the meeting for a third time.

Discussion A1

Summary of A1

A1 started with Douglas (a course author of Course 2 and the chairperson of the meeting) explaining why he shifted the order of the meeting and brought forward an agenda item for immediate discussion. It was because Mac (the editor of Course 2) needed to leave the meeting early and he hoped Mac would have some ideas about these blocks (Blocks 3, 4, and 5 in the second phase of rolling re-make) in the meeting before he left.

Douglas then mentioned that although it was written in the meeting agenda that this would be the first attempt to look at the shape of Blocks 3, 4 and 5, in fact both a letter and a document had already been produced. They were (1) a memo regarding Block 3. (It was written by Vincent who was a course author and the block co-ordinator of this block. It was distributed to all the participants of the meeting.) and (2) the document regarding the review of course materials in Block 4 of predecessor Course 2P. (This review had been written and distributed by Arthur, a course author of Course 2, to other course team members' offices in this morning before the meeting.) Douglas therefore hoped to start the discussion by going through these two relevant reference materials.

However, Hugh (a course author of Course 2) immediately shifted the focus of discussion and reported his contact with prospective 'external consultants' (i.e., the course authors who were contracted by the course team from outside of the University) for these blocks. Hugh indicated that Ian was the one who would be expected to be the block co-ordinator of Block 4. Hugh suggested that the course team should ensure Ian's involvement in the work as early as possible. Charlotte, a course author in the predecessor Course 2P, was interested in re-writing her own unit. Regarding Block 5, the external person whom Hugh had liaised with was Gina. Although she was happy to make some contributions to Block 5, she needed to check the schedule of the course team in order to match with her commitment on the other course. Hugh finally said that the recruitment of these people to the course team was the way to utilise the existing

resources. Douglas therefore concluded that he would prepare the welcome letters to them.

The further discussion moved to the concerns regarding the allocation of work to participants of the course team. Hugh raised the point that people other than Arthur were needed to re-check the course materials in Block 4 in the predecessor Course 2P although Arthur had already done the preliminary review of the block. The new work, i.e., 'to give Block 4 an alternative rationale', thus emerged and was eventually distributed to both Ian and Gina.

At this moment, Douglas suggested that he had better not be involved in the discussion on these blocks because he supposed that his work in the course team was restricted to other blocks. The other reason was that he was required to work on the other course as well.

Arthur then suggested that the meeting should at that point decide which block among Blocks 3, 4, and 5 should be worked on first. This resulted from his review. In his opinion, Block 4 should be worked on first since this block would need more up dating. As to Block 5, he thought it had no big problems. Only a few parts needed to be adjusted, such as a significant mistake that he had pointed out. However, Grace (the course manager of Course 2) replied that she had to push all three blocks ahead based on her duty as the course manager.

When discussion was underway, Mac said that he must leave the meeting. This made Douglas consequently announce that the focus of the meeting would be quickly moved to the tabled paper 'the drafted schedule'.

Primary analysis of A1

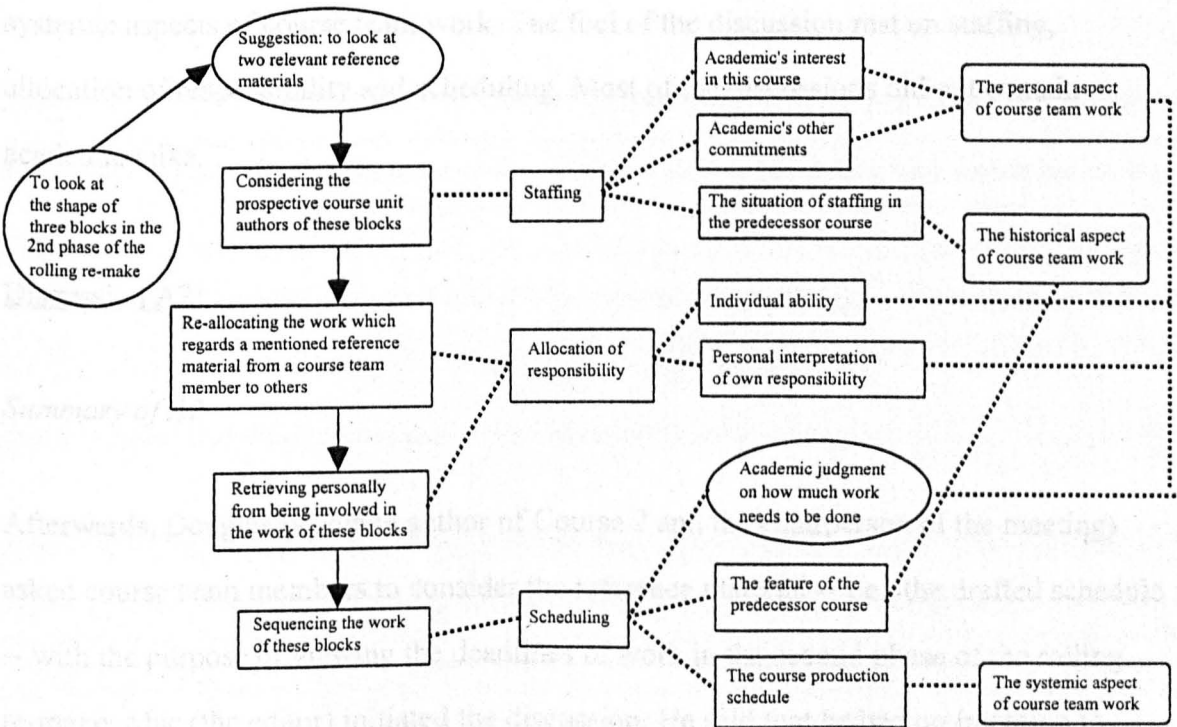
It can be seen that the course team members did not follow the plan presented in the meeting agenda from the very outset -- this agenda item was brought forward for earlier discussion at the meeting. There was no academic reason for this procedural change. It

was merely because a course team member wanted to leave the meeting earlier. Although the meeting chairperson tried to stimulate academic concerns at the beginning of the discussion by directing other course team members to look at two relevant reference materials, it can be seen that course team members did not tackle this agenda item with academic concern most of time.

In short, although the shape of three blocks of printed course units in the second phase of rolling re-make should be the focus of discussion, course team members immediately shifted the flow of discussion from viewing two relevant reference materials suggested by the meeting chairperson to the following items:

- The consideration on the prospective authors of these blocks of course units
- The re-allocation of a specific piece of work from one team member to others
- The individual retrieval from being involved in the work of these blocks
- The sequence of working on these blocks

It can be said that the course team members dealt with the agenda item by addressing the following issues: staffing, the allocation of responsibility and scheduling. Figure 6-2 illustrates the primary analysis of the discussion.



[Figure 6- 2] Primary Analysis of A1

In this part of discussion, the issue of staffing was considered from the following three points: academic's interest in the course, academic's other commitments and the situation of staffing in the predecessor course. Regarding the issue of allocation of responsibility, the following two points were implicit in the discussion, i.e., individual ability and personal interpretation of own responsibility. With respect to the issue of scheduling, the course team members, in addition to using their academic judgement on how much work needed to be done, considered two aspects, namely, the feature of the predecessor course and the course production schedule.

To synthesise, all the academic's interest in the course, academic's other commitments, individual ability, interpretation of personal responsibility and academic judgement on how much work needed to be done represented the personal aspect of course team work. Both the staffing in the predecessor course and the feature of the predecessor course show the historical aspect of course team work. The course production schedule signified the systemic aspect of course team work.

To sum up, the discussion in this part of discussion exhibited the personal, historical and systemic aspects of course team work. The foci of the discussion rest on staffing, allocation of responsibility and scheduling. Most of the discussions did not contain academic talks.

Discussion A2

Summary of A2

Afterwards, Douglas (a course author of Course 2 and the chairperson of the meeting) asked course team members to consider the reference material -- i.e., the drafted schedule -- with the purpose of viewing the deadlines of work in the second phase of the rolling re-make, Mac (the editor) initiated the discussion. He said that he had no intention to discuss the schedule for the second phase of rolling re-make. Rather, he was more

interested in the schedule of Blocks 1 and 2 (which were in the first phase of rolling re-make) because he had been aware that the deadlines of the work of these two blocks in this revised schedule were moved forward. Hugh (a course author of Course 2) also noticed the change occurred in his first unit (i.e., Unit 1 of Block 1 that was in the first phase of rolling re-make). He found that the time to hand over this course unit to editor was apparently reduced compared with the previous schedule. Douglas on the other hand pointed out that there was a sixteen-month gap between the date of handing over that particular course unit to the editor and 'the mailing date' (i.e., the date that the course materials were mailed to students).

Grace (the course manager of Course 2) apologised for some typing errors in the schedule. In the mean time, she explained how the schedule had been constructed. First, although the course was a rolling re-made one which might suggest that it could have comparatively short production time, the course units in fact still needed to go through the whole process in the system -- the same as other ordinary new courses. Thus, the scheduled time for making the course was long. Second, the course could not get as many mailing dates from the system as academics wanted. Hence, some course units needed to be written much earlier than 'the student usage date' (i.e., the date that students actually study the course materials).

Hugh queried this. Grace then replied that the schedule had been arranged based on the needs of each of the working units involved at the University and on the match between each course unit. She would try to ask the Project Control to explain this to the team if they wanted. She said that both she and Mac needed the input from course authors. But so far they had only obtained little information from academics regarding how Block 1 would likely be re-made. This made scheduling very difficult.

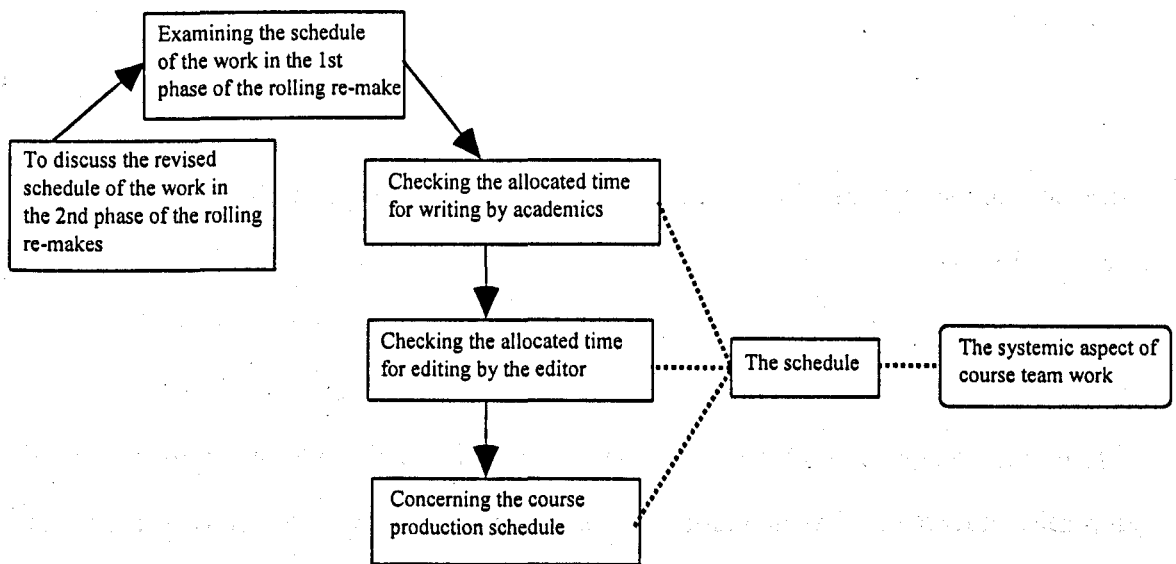
Mac, following Grace, further explained that the problem of scheduling stemmed from the congestion of editor's work on Blocks 3, 4, and 5 (in the second phase of rolling re-make) since they came soon after Blocks 1 and 2 (in the first phase of rolling re-make). Thus, the hand-over time for Block 1 to the editor was moved ahead. Mac reminded the course authors that the team only had one and a half editors, rather than five editors.

Thus, the workload of editors was heavy which meant that academics needed to adjust their working time in order to let editors have time to meet deadlines.

Hugh immediately disagreed with Mac's statement. He replied that he himself, in terms of the plan of his workload, had got Summer School, another course, and other various tasks to conduct before he started to work on this course. Thus, he could not work early and could not accept the schedule based merely on editor's needs. His opinion received support from Douglas. Then, Grace explained that this rolling re-make was new to everybody; and people had not previously done a schedule for rolling re-make and for the course using an electronic publishing process. These were the reasons why a number of problems had emerged. At this moment, Hugh reminded other course team members that an early suggestion might be worth considering again.

Primary analysis of A2

The discussion in part two focuses on the proposed schedule of work that is a revised version of the original schedule and was presented as a tabled paper at the meeting. Although the course team chairperson asked other course team members to consider the deadlines of the work in the second phase of rolling re-make, course team members immediately moved their concern to the schedule of the work in the first phase of rolling re-make. The course production schedule was then mentioned. It is apparent that the discussion in this part completely focused on the schedule (see figure 6-3).



[Figure 6- 3] Primary Analysis of A2

It was also apparent that the schedule related to the systemic aspect of course team work. In this part of the discussion, the schedule was considered from the perspectives of the time for academics to do their writing, the time for the editor to do his editing and the time for the system to operate. None of the talks in this part comprised academic concerns.

Discussion A3

Summary of A3

Hugh (a course author of Course 2) now reminded other course team members that an earlier suggestion might be worth considering again, i.e., to move Block 5 from the second phase of rolling re-make into the third phase of rolling re-make. In other words, rather than producing three blocks in the second phase of rolling re-make, he suggested that they could produce only two blocks. In this way, editor's workload in the second phase of rolling re-make could be reduced, and the blocks in the first phase of rolling re-make, especially his first unit in Block 1 in the first phase of rolling re-make, could be completed later than the proposed deadlines in this schedule. This shift would not hinder

Gina's (an external consultant of Course 2) writing in Block 5 in the second phase of rolling re-make. Rather this would give her more time to do it.

Arthur (a course author of Course 2) supported this idea. But he raised another concern: so far he had no idea of the depth of re-making Block 3 (in the second phase of rolling re-make). Grace (the course manager of Course 2) taking his point replied that this was one of the difficulties in scheduling. After this, she immediately shifted the focus of her talk and responded to Hugh. She said she knew Hugh had got considerable amount of commitments. But, she asserted that the course team members still must work within the system although they had come across all sort of difficulties. Thus, she hoped that Hugh's first unit still needed to be written early and be used as 'unit zero' (i.e., a drafted course unit which would be taken as an example of standardising the formats of designing, editing, printing, and so on).

Under these circumstances, Arthur urged that the academic's individual timetable needed to be taken into account -- the schedule should not be made only with the consideration on the timetable of the system. Hugh immediately supported him.

Douglas (a course author of Course 2 and the chairperson of the meeting) then raised another question -- the number of course units in Block 3 (that is in the second phase of rolling re-make). In the attached memo written by Vincent (who was a course author and the block co-ordinator of Block 3 in Course 2 and who was absent from this meeting), there were four course units in Block 3. It was apparent that there were two course units less than the one in predecessor Course 2P that had six course units in Block 3. Grace explained to him -- since the other block (Block 2, in the first phase of rolling re-make) had increased its number of course units, other blocks of the course should drop some course units in order to get the right total amount of course units in the course. Douglas replied that the reduction of the number of course units in Block 3 would affect the whole working schedule. Hugh following this line said that he was not sure if Block 3 should just have four course units. Grace then suggested that all the people should get together to determine the proper number of course units in each block.

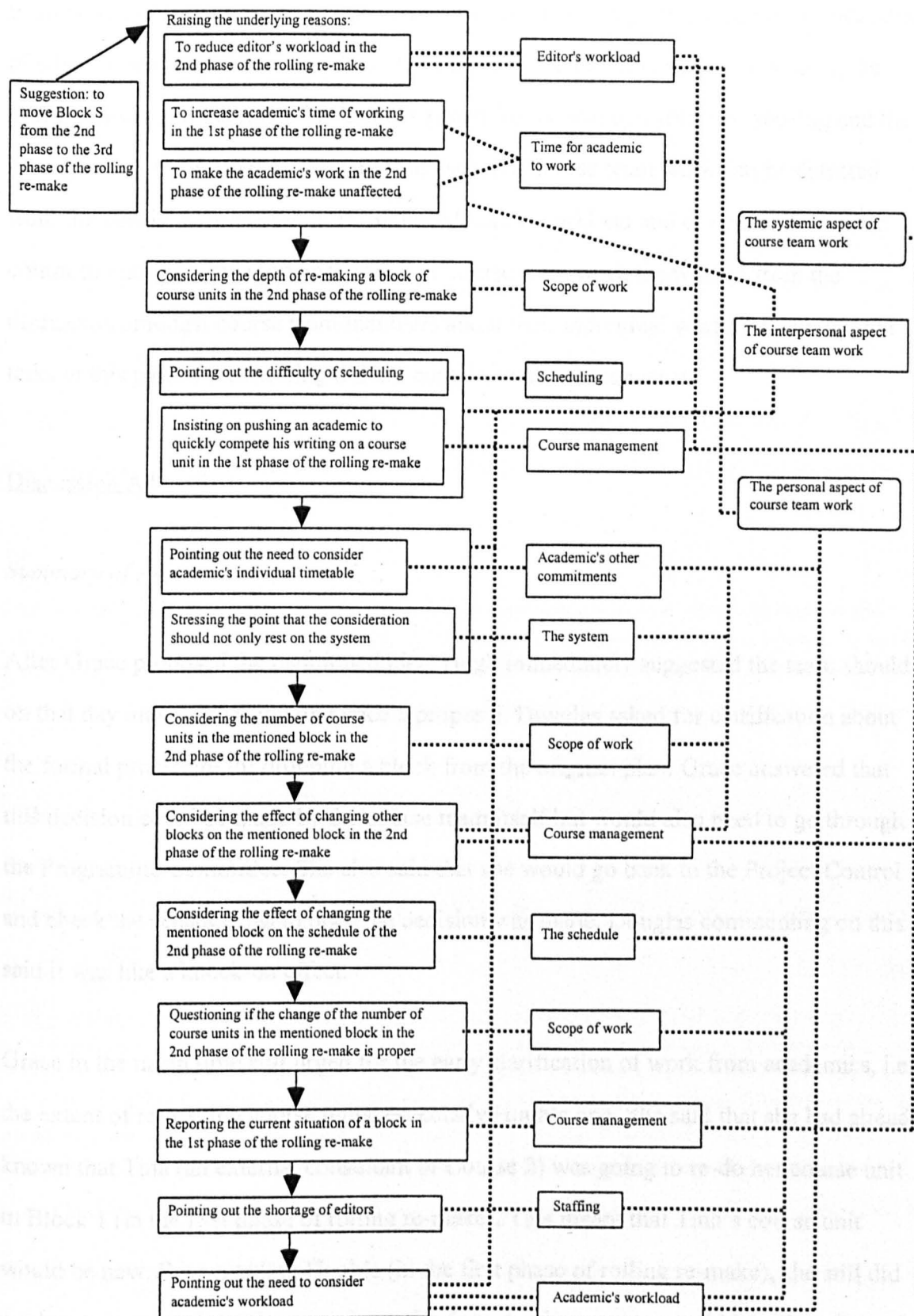
Hugh wanted to make a point. Grace then said that regarding the problem of Block 1 (in the first phase of rolling re-make) it seemed to arise from Hugh. Thus, the discussion drifted to the current situation of Block 1. Grace indicated that as a result of her contact with Tina (an external consultant of Course 2) she felt that Tina could cope with the deadline in this schedule. Hugh afterwards also reported the situation of other people. Since Pedro (who was a course author of predecessor Course 2P) rejected to take the responsibility again in this re-made Course 2, Sam (an academic who worked in another university) was instead contacted. It was likely that Sam would write the course unit. If so, Hugh would prepare a specification to outline the method of re-making the course unit for Sam, mainly to reduce and simplify the existing course materials. Regarding his own current situation, he could not write anything on Unit 1 of Block 1 at that time. Grace then pointed out that rather than writing something for Sam, Hugh had better write something into his own course unit.

Afterwards, the issues returned to the shortage of editors and the need of considering academic's workload. When both Hugh and Mac still persisted with their own opinions, Grace again suggested the old proposal as the solution. That was to move Block 5 from the second phase of the rolling re-make into the third phase of the rolling re-make in order to reduce editor's workload in the second phase of rolling re-make and to increase the time of writing for academics in the first phase of the rolling re-make.

Primary analysis of A3

This part of discussion started with the following suggestion: to move a block of course units from the second phase to the third phase of the rolling re-make. The reasons for this were (1) to reduce editor's workload in the second phase of rolling re-make, (2) to increase academic's time of writing in the first phase of rolling re-make and (3) to leave the academic's work in the second phase of the rolling re-make unchanged. This suggestion aroused the concern on the depth of re-making another block in the second phase of the rolling re-make. Also both the difficulty of scheduling and the insistence on pushing an academic to quickly complete his writing on a course unit in the first phase of the rolling re-make were raised. Afterwards, the need to consider academic's individual

timetable was urged. It was also pointed out that the schedule should not be made only based on the time of operating the system. Moreover, the number of course units in the mentioned block in the second phase of the rolling re-make was queried. Then, the following questions were asked. What would happen to the mentioned block in the second phase of rolling re-make if other blocks were changed? Would it be proper that the number of course units of the mentioned block in the second phase of the rolling re-make is changed? Afterwards, the situation of a block in the first phase of rolling re-make was reported. The editor again pointed out the shortage of editors. An academic immediately urged the consideration of academic timetable. To sum up, the course team members in this part of discussion considered aspects of editor's workload, academic's work, scheduling, scope of work, course management, University's system for course construction, staffing and academic's workload. Figure 6-4 illustrates the analysis of the discussion.



[Figure 6- 4] Primary Analysis of A3

From the above figure, it can be seen that this part of discussion shows the systemic, personal, and interpersonal aspects of course team work. The systemic aspect of course

team work is represented by course management which comprises, e.g., the consideration of editor's and academic's workload, the time allocated to academics for writing, the scope of work, scheduling, University's system for course construction, staffing and the management of discussion. The personal aspect of course team work can be detected from the considerations of editor's and academic's workload and of academic's other commitments. The interpersonal aspect of course team work is revealed from the discussion amongst course team members about their individual work. To sum up, the talks in this part of the meeting did not contain academic concerns.

Discussion A4

Summary of A4

After Grace proposed the mentioned idea, Hugh immediately suggested the team should on that day make a decision on Grace's proposal. Douglas asked for clarification about the formal procedure for dropping a block from the original plan. Grace answered that this decision could be made by the course team itself but would also need to go through the Programme Committee. She also said that she would go back to the Project Control and check the schedule again once the decision was made. Douglas commenting on this said it was like a knock-on effect.

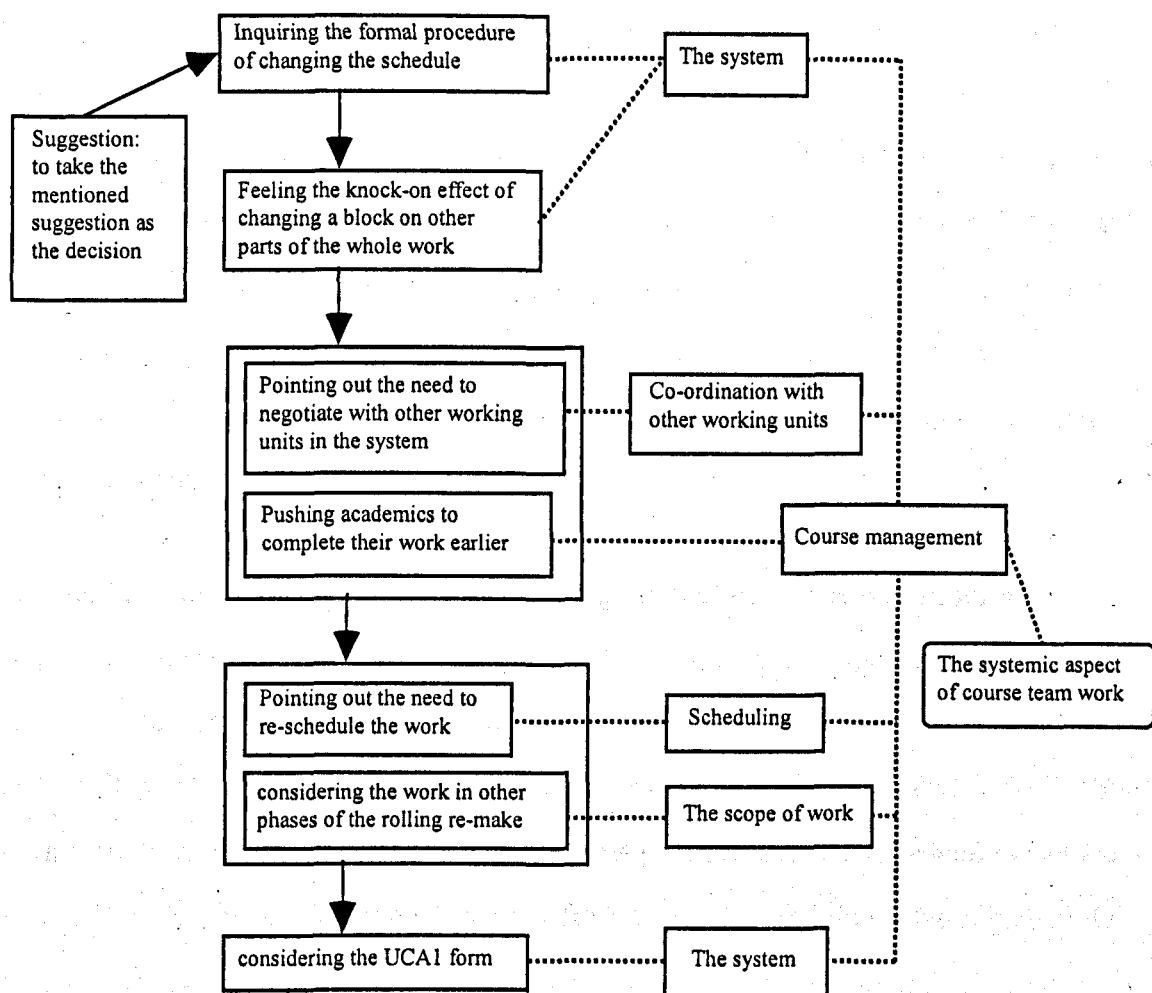
Grace in the mean time still urged for the early clarification of work from academics, i.e., the extent of re-making course units, especially Hugh's one. She said that she had already known that Tina (an external consultant of Course 2) was going to re-do her course unit in Block 1 (in the first phase of rolling re-make). This meant that Tina's course unit would be new. But regarding Hugh's (in the first phase of rolling re-make), she still did not know how much work was going to be done for the secretary and Mac (the editor of Course 2).

Mac following her point said they could look at the schedule again in future once they knew what they were going to do, who would do it and when it would be done. He said they at the moment had just had vague ideas. The team's plan had to go to the

Programme Board. Only after everything was fixed, could they really say that this was the confirmed situation. Also he hoped to know more about the future, i.e., how to make the course in other phases of the rolling re-make. Grace continued along the same lines and said that the 'UCA 1 form' (see Chapter 4) for the course units in the second phase of the rolling re-make would need some input from the decision made at the present meeting. When Grace mentioned that 'until we as a course team actually make the decision then we can't go away and do new ones of these', Mac was reminded by her words 'go away' and said that he really had to leave the meeting now.

Primary analysis of A4

In this part, the course team members re-considered the proposed suggestion, i.e., to change the schedule by dropping a block of course units from the second phase to the third phase of the rolling re-make. The foci of this part of discussion rested on the formal procedure of changing the schedule, the knock-on effect of changing a block on other parts of the whole work, the need to negotiate with other working units in the University's system for course construction, the requirement for an early completion of writing, the need to re-schedule the work, the need to consider the work in other phases of the rolling re-make and the completion of the UCA 1 form. The University's system for course construction, course management, scheduling and the scope of work were the major points of this part of the discussion. The analysis is illustrated in figure 6-5.



[Figure 6- 5] Primary Analysis of A4

It can be seen from the figure that all the discussion related to the systemic aspect of course team work. Course management becomes the theme of the discussion, which is discussed from the perspectives of the University's system for course construction, the co-ordination with other working units, scheduling and the scope of work. The discussion in this part still did not contain any academic talk.

Discussion A5

Summary of A5

After Mac told others for the third time that he really had to leave the meeting, Arthur (a course author of Course 2) wanted to say something before Mac left.

Arthur felt that the whole process of this discussion was putting things into the wrong order. He therefore wanted to get an assurance from Mac that academics could still obtain enough editorial support if the decision of postponing Block 5 to the next phase of the rolling re-make was made. After he obtained Mac's agreement, he raised his second point -- that the decision that they were going to make was being regarded as a minor issue rather than one that controlled the whole course. Hence, he suggested that academics should review Block 5 for a certain period of time in order to provide more academic input.

Mac said that he really had to leave the meeting immediately. The reason for his imminent departure from the meeting was that the priority for 'Book A' (i.e., an edited book of the course, which he was working on at the moment) was very urgent. This was because it was handed over to him late and was in a bad shape that needed considerable work from him. Therefore, if Block 1 (in the first phase of the rolling re-make) handed over to him late, he would have to go away from the course and do something else. He reminded everybody there that it was a long way away, i.e., eleven-month difference. This was what he wanted to say in advance. Moreover, he still urged for some more solid arrangements on writing from academics than had been given so far. In the end, in responding to Arthur's comments he said he was not the one who drove academics crazy. Rather, the wretched production process was the real tail that was wagging the dog. To respond, Hugh said that the squeeze of working time usually happened on academics and this was no longer acceptable.

Douglas immediately took over the flow of discussion and said he as the chairperson of the meeting thought they should let Mac leave the meeting now. He thanked Mac who then left. Then, he declared that his agenda was already destroyed because the course team members kept on changing from one subject to another.

Grace asked for the confirmation of decisions that had already been made today. Hugh reminded the team that the proposed deadline in the schedule for his first unit was not manageable. Douglas immediately replied to him that they could not start that discussion again.

Douglas then suggested that the team should concentrate on the agenda -- in which was written that 'this is a first attempt to look at the shape of these blocks'. Thus, he thought that it should remain as the first attempt. In other words, at that stage they should not make any final decision on whether Block 5 was going to be dropped from the second phase of the rolling re-make to the third phase of rolling re-make or not. He felt that they could not at that time make such a decision since they in fact had not yet properly tackled the relevant. For example, they did not know if Vincent's suggestion on altering the number of units in Block 3 from six to four was acceptable. Hence, there was a range of issues that still could not be detected and measured. They needed more time for further consideration. He thus suggested to Grace that if she wanted to have the 'UCA 1 form' completed on time, the team had better not cancel the additional meeting that they had already decided to hold earlier. Grace asked if everybody could attend this additional meeting in the near future. Hugh in addition to answering 'yes' said that he would treat this additional meeting as an extremely important event.

Douglas said he did not think they could go any further with that item on the agenda, after which Grace said she had been aware that the discussion in fact had already adequately covered the other on the agenda of their meeting.

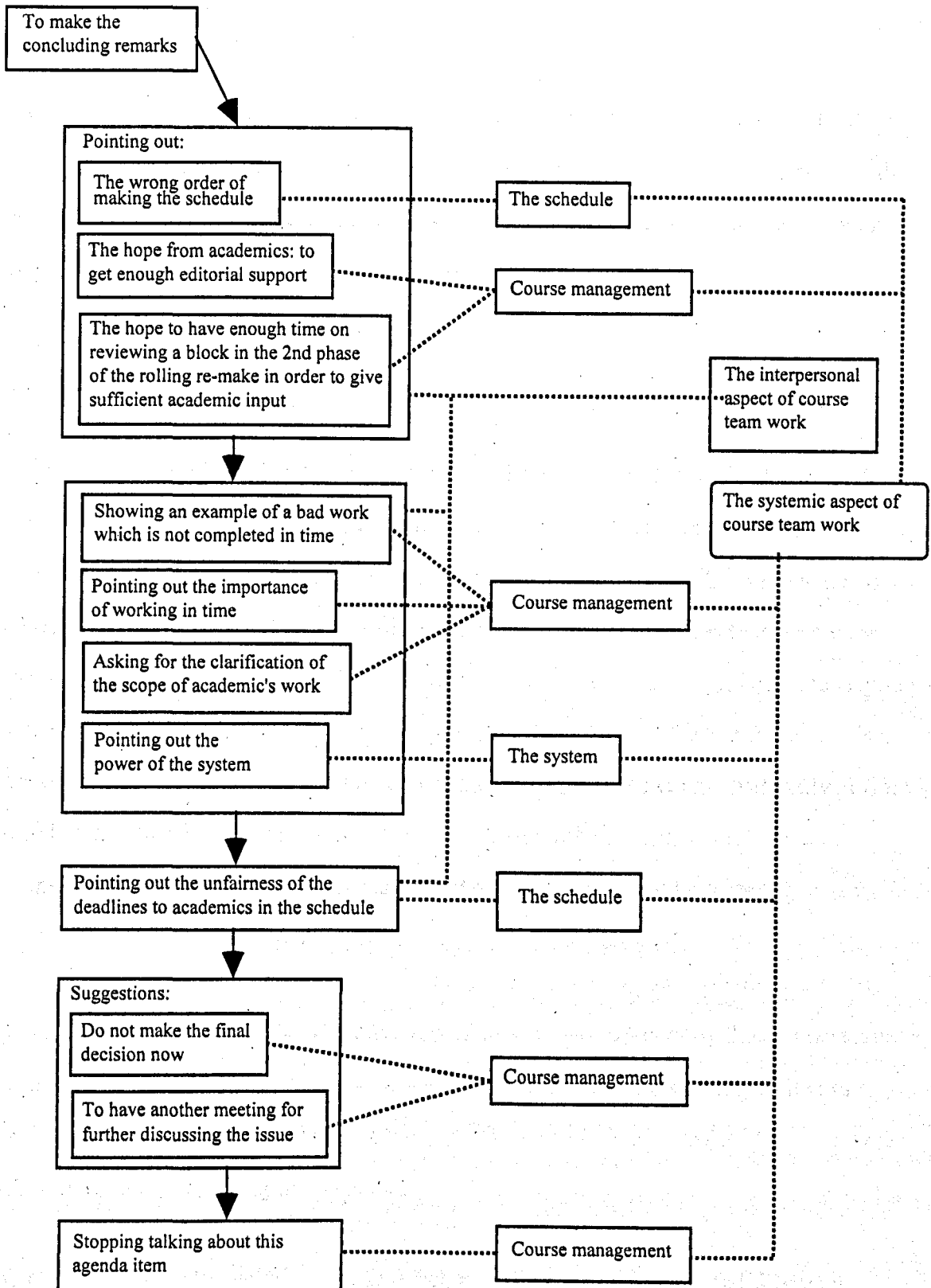
Primary analysis of A5

The final part of the discussion consisted of various concluding remarks regarding matters developed in the previous four parts. The final thoughts of course team members were as follows. (1) It would be the wrong order to make the schedule. (2) The academics hoped to get adequate editorial support. (3) In order to give sufficient academic input, it was hoped to have enough time on reviewing a block in the second phase of the rolling re-make. (4) A piece of bad work that was not completed in time was presented. (5) It was important to work to deadlines. (6) It was urged to clarify the scope of academic's work. (6) The power of the system was noted. (7) The deadlines in schedules were inappropriate for academics. (8) It was suggested to postpone the decision of changing schedules. (9) Another meeting for further discussion on the issue was also suggested. (10) It was decided to curtail the discussion. In general, this part of

the discussion highlighted the concerns about the schedule, course management and the system. The analysis is presented in figure 6-6.

It is apparent that the discussion shows the systemic and the interpersonal aspects of course team work. The systemic aspect of course team work can be detected from the discussion on the schedule, course management and University's system for course construction. Furthermore, the interpersonal aspect of course team work can be seen from the dispute among course team members. To sum up, the course team members in this final part of discussion have still not dealt with academic concerns.

As a whole, these five parts of discussions in example A have addressed the following issues: staffing, the allocation of responsibility, scheduling, workload, the time to work, the scope of work, course management, course team member's other commitments, University's system for course construction and the co-ordination with other working units. This situation reflected that all the course team members in the meeting were involved in the work of course management. The analysis has thus identified that the practical concern was a foundation of the discussion of the academic issue. The practical concern had shown the systemic, interpersonal, personal and historical aspects of course team work.



[Figure 6- 6] Primary Analysis of A5

6.3.2 Example B

This is the discussion extracted from the 18th course team meeting of Course 3 held on the 23rd of November 1993. Like the analysis of example A, this analysis starts from the introduction of background information. Next, the whole of the talk is broken down into six parts that are summarised and analysed respectively.

Background of example B

Course 3 is a second level undergraduate course that was provided by Centre 3 in the School of Education. The course was scheduled to have its first presentation in 1996. According to the plan, the course materials were organised into four books that are co-published by an outside publisher. A special feature of this course was that the course was put in the scheme of University's international collaboration. So, this course is going to be exported by the University to Country X. Another issue is whether the course is a new one or not. Some course team members mentioned that the course had evolved from an old course that has been previously presented. But, other course team members claimed that there were differences between the course and the old course.

At the time of having this meeting, the development of the course was still in the early stage, like the above example. The situation of course development by this course team was stated below. (1) The writing work was in the process of drafting the outline of course materials. (2) The other parts of the whole work of the course development were still at the stage of exchanging basic ideas.

There were 12 people, including the researcher, when the meeting started. They sat around a block of connected tables in a meeting room. Rita, the course team chairperson chaired the meeting. She as usual sat next to the course manager Connie. Three out of four permanent academic staff in the course team was there. They were Louis, Karen, and Andy. The editor Tracy, the secretary Lisa and a BBC producer Ted also attended the meeting. Moreover, Doris was from the publishing division. Grace, the course manager

of Course 2, also participated in the meeting by invitation. A participant called Russell sat in the meeting for the first time as a guest. He, coming from Country M, is a visiting scholar of Centre 3.

The meeting started at 10:00am and ended about 13:30pm. Before discussion began, Grace had already left because the particular agenda item relating to her work had already been discussed. During the following discussion, Russell, Ted and Andy also left the meeting one by one. In total, eight people remained in the meeting during the discussion on the following agenda item.

- 'Course promotion'

For discussing the agenda item, the following attached discussion paper was provided to participants of the meeting.

- Paper: 'the promotion issues'

This paper was contributed by Louis (an academic who is the head of Centre 3 in the School). The paper consisted of the following two parts.

- Course promotion (1): publicising the course
- Course promotion (2): designation of the course code

To deal with the agenda item, the participants in the course team meeting firstly discuss the second part of the paper, i.e., 'designation of the course code'. Afterwards, they revisited the first part of the paper, i.e., 'publicising the course'.

Since the whole discussion was very long, the researcher only focused on the discussion on the first part of paper, i.e., '*publicising the course*'. Regarding this, Louis raised seven relevant issues (see table 6-5) in his paper.

[Table 6- 5] Main Points in a Section of an Attached Discussion Paper

Issues of Publicising Course 3	
(a)	How diverse is our audience? (i.e., does it consist of a set of fairly distinct audiences?)
(b)	If our audience is diverse, do we need to describe the course in slightly different ways in the publicity aimed at each of them?
(c)	What is the best timing for our main push on promotion? (I assume we need to find out more about this from regional staff and staff involved in other programmes, e.g., post-graduate programme.)
(d)	If we are aiming for European/other students, do different mechanisms and time-scales apply?
(e)	Is there any way we can use the independent publication of the 'books' to publicise the course?
(f)	How can we best generate other kinds of publicity, outside the normal channels? (e.g., articles on controversial, humorous or innovative themes in newspapers, radio programmes and journals)
(g)	How can we use external contributors to the course as a means for publicity?

(Based on a discussion paper attached to the meeting agenda of 18th course team meeting of Course 3)

This part of discussion lasted for about one hour and two minutes. It is broken into five parts (B1 ~ B5). To analyse the data, as in the previous example, both the summary and primary analysis is provided in each part.

Discussion B1

Summary of B1

Rita (the course team chairperson of Course 3) initiated the discussion. She asked, 'can we have just a minute to read down attached Paper One and talk about that?' People in the meeting consequently followed her lead and read the attached discussion paper silently for a short time. Louis (a course author of Course 3 and the director of Centre 3) was firstly invited to give an introductory talk because he was the one who wrote the paper. He immediately tackled the issue of the diversity of the audience of the course, i.e., the variety of prospective students. He asked: 'does anybody feel that we can identify a sort of a limited set of audiences?'

In order to identify their students, people in the meeting next moved to discuss the partner courses within the UKOU. This was because the partner courses could recruit students together and share them. Several examples were soon given. But after some time, people in the meeting realised that they first needed to pinpoint the features of the courses and of their students. The formal procedure of having the partner courses and the presumed reasons to justify it were also addressed. Andy (a course author of Course 3

and a sub-dean of the School) then suggested that it would be helpful if there were a supporting statement from the external course assessor, which explained the plan to have the partner courses. He said: 'I think what it will need is a statement, a supporting statement from the external assessor or examiner.' He also suggested that the course team had better contact other administrative units instead of the usual one if they wanted to work on this matter more effectively.

Rita following the flow of talk mentioned her contact with somebody in other programmes that had been recruiting students from outside of the UKOU. She reported how the programme had promoted its courses. Doris (from Publishing Division) afterwards raised an issue regarding the relationship between the course and Faculty/Centre M (i.e., the academic unit that provided courses in the same broad academic field as Centre 3 of the School but explored different domains of the field). According to her, this academic unit changed the name of the course based on the need to promote the course. Louis responded to her and described the similar situation happened in other academic units.

At this point, Rita raised another consideration. She said she preferred to emphasize the actual course content and to have an 'introduction' written that referred to different contexts for various students. Louis elaborated her idea by pointing out that this could entail the information of the course being distributed to different locations.

Afterwards, Rita raised a different suggestion, namely, the promotion of the course in Summer School. She said: '... also the actual vehicle for you getting them to the right places.' According to her, this idea came from her teaching experience there.

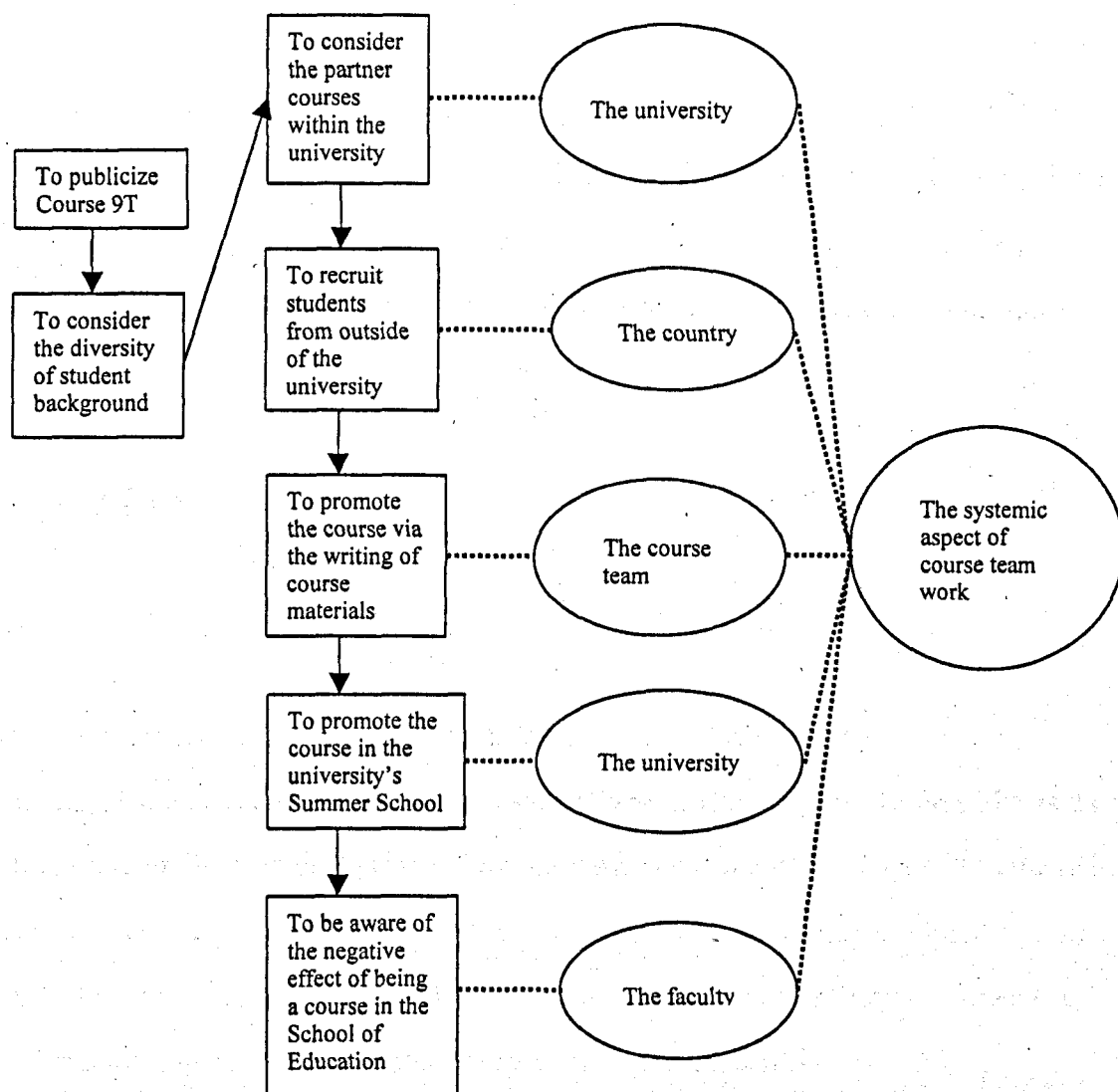
During the discussion, the concern on the location of the course, i.e., as a course provided by the School of Education, was aired. This was because people in the meeting felt that generally courses associated with the School of Education had an image problem. For instance, Karen (a course author of Course 3 and the permanent academic staff in Centre 3) said: 'I got very negative feedback on courses called "... Education"...

He [i.e., a senior counsellor] suggested that the School of Education should re-name itself.'

Primary analysis of B1

This part of the agenda item (namely, 'publicising the course') was firstly tackled from considering the diversity of student background. The issue of 'student background' might be discussed from either the academic point of view by thinking of pedagogy or the practical perspective.

In the meeting, people immediately talked about the partner courses within the University. The next suggestion was to recruit students beyond the University. A different focus afterwards emerged, i.e., the use of course materials to promote the course. It was suggested that the authors of course materials could emphasize the actual course context. Even the different contexts for various students could be put in the 'introduction' section of the course material. Another view was that they could do the course promotion in Summer School. It emerged that there was a negative effect associated with courses in the School of Education. All these are presented in figure 6-7.



The figure shows that the discussion regarding the partner courses within the University is related to the practice of the University. Regarding the recruitment of students from outside of the University, it shows that people in the meeting extended the scope of their thinking to the country. There was another consideration within the discussion, i.e., to promote the course via the writing of course materials. This reflected that the angle of the thinking turns to the role of the academic in the course team. To write the course materials is the academic's main work in the course team. The idea of promoting the course in the university's Summer School implies that they considered the practice of the University again. As to the warning about the negative effect of having the course code with 'E' that represents the School of Education, this is a general matter for the faculty.

To sum up, the discussions in B1 were focused on an issue (i.e., ‘the diversity of student background’) and were tackled by people in the meeting as a practical one. The main underlying concerns rested on the University, the country, the course team and the faculty. These concerns showed the systemic aspect of course team work. Most of the talks in B1 could be categorised as practical talks. There was only one talk, i.e., about writing the course materials, which could be loosely connected with the academic concepts.

Discussion B2

Summary of B2

People in the meeting then moved to unravel the relationship between the course (namely, Course 3) and other courses, especially with Course 3PS. (Course 3PS is the other undergraduate course provided by the same department, i.e., Centre 3 in the School. This course was provided before. In the plan of Centre 3, it would be offered again.) Louis (a course author of Course 3 and the director of Centre 3) first mentioned the unfortunate experience of low student numbers on Course 3PS.

‘We really want number [i.e., a big student population] on Course 3PS. ... But in many ways, we [i.e., the course team members of Course 3] are trying to reach the same lot of people. ... I just wondered whether we are very careful in how we go about it [i.e., Course 3PS] this year, so as we are treating it as something we can if you like write up for the benefit of Course 3 as well.’ (Louis, a course author of Course 3 and the director of Centre 3)

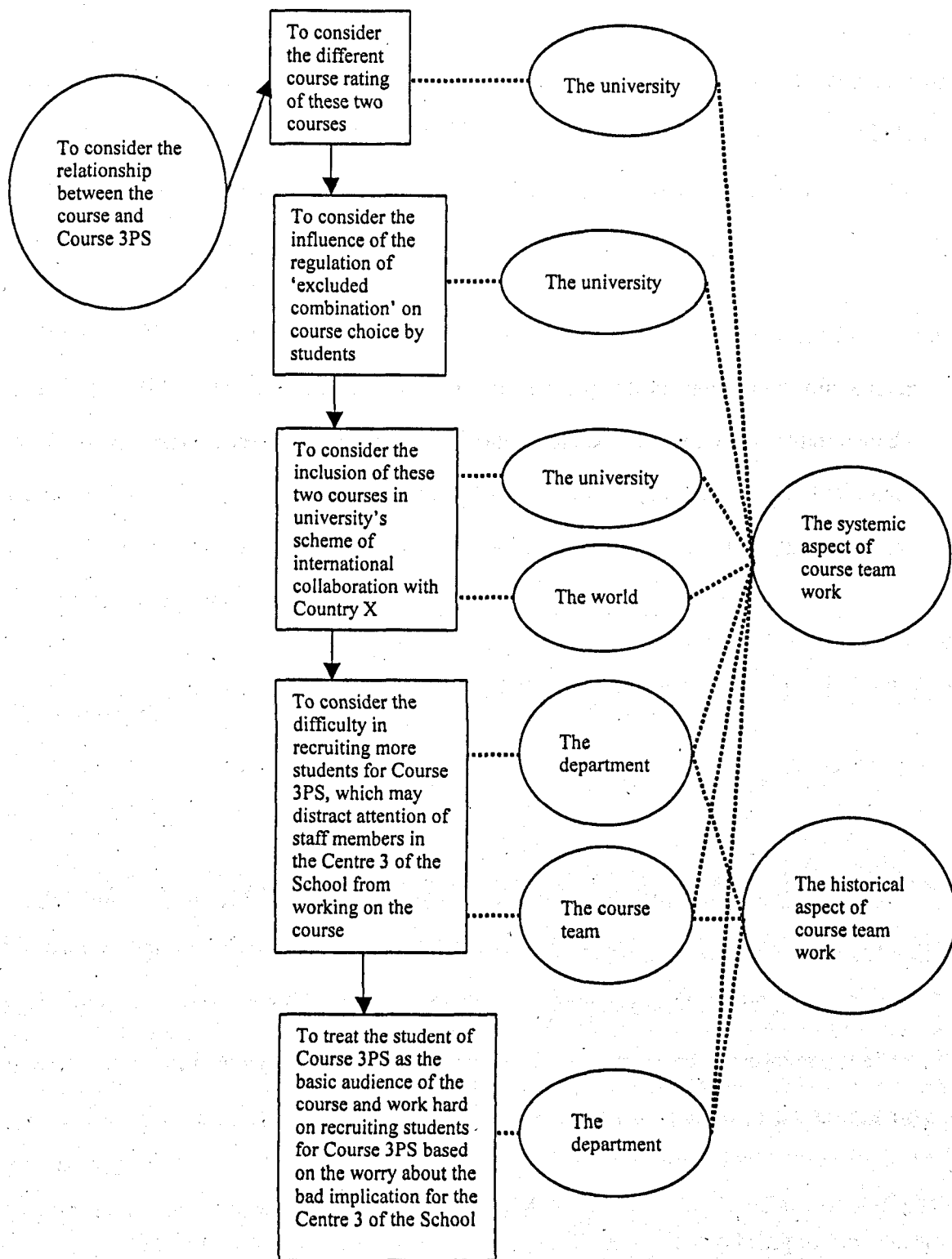
People in the meeting consequently started to discuss the relationship between these two courses. They first pointed out that the course rating of these two courses was different. They next mentioned a University regulation, namely, ‘excluded combination’. This rule means that once the rule was applied to both Course 3 and Course 3PS, the University would treat these two courses as having a substantial overlap of academic content. Students therefore could not use their course credits received from Course 3 for graduation process if they attempted to use their course credits achieved from Course 3PS as well. This consideration made the situation become much complicated. Especially

since in the mean time the meeting was reminded that these two courses were already included in University's scheme of international collaboration with Country X.

People were also afraid that Course 3 would be badly influenced by the very limited student number of Course 3PS. For instance, Rita said: 'what I don't want us to do, or Centre 3 to do, is to devote our energy to Course 3PS to detract from energy that I'd like to put into Course 3.' However, there was a different view from Louis. He would rather treat the student of Course 3PS as the basic audience of Course 3. He warned: 'I think you [i.e., Rita] have got to think of the negative implications within the University for Centre 3 and for the image of the courses in this academic field if Course 3PS recruits badly again next year.'

Primary analysis of B2

In this part of the discussion, the central focus was 'the relationship between the course (namely, Course 3) and Course 3PS'. In other words, the boundary of the course was the concern. This issue was firstly discussed by considering the different ratings of these two courses. The talk next focused on the regulation of 'excluded combination'. Afterwards, the situation that these two courses are already included in University's scheme of international collaboration with Country X was addressed. The bad record of recruiting students for Course 3PS raises different views. One was the concern about the bad impact on the work of developing Course 3 once the department puts more efforts into recruiting more students for the next presentation of Course 3PS. The other suggestion was that the course team of Course 3 had better treat Course 3PS as the base. Otherwise there would be some bad implication for the department. The primary analysis of B2 is presented in figure 6-8.



[Figure 6- 8] Primary Analysis of B2

The exchanges about the different ratings of these two courses were related to the practice of the University. The regulation of 'excluded combination' was also a matter for the University. The inclusion of these two courses in the University's scheme of

international collaboration with Country X reached the levels of University and the world. Regarding the challenge of putting more effort into Course 3PS and distracting attention of staff in the department from working on Course 3, it showed the concerns of both the department and the course team. The suggestion that Course 3 team had better treat Course 3PS as its base for the sake of the department represented a departmental viewpoint.

To sum up, B2 started from an academic issue (i.e., 'the relationship between the course and Course 3PS'). Most of the discussion showed the systemic aspects of course team work. A few aspects reflected the historical aspect of course team work. It happened because Course 3PS was an existing course that had a lot of history. Most of talk can be categorised as practical talk. Although some talks relate to both courses and students, they were more practically based.

Discussion B3

Summary of B3

Andy then gave his view. He said that the School was trying to send out the course-choice booklet through the regions in other mailings. Its purpose was to reach out to all undergraduate students. The reason for this was to get more students who were both teachers and non-teachers. According to him, teachers comprised the conventional market for the School of Education, whereas non-teachers seemed to be a market worth developing.

'The one very important reason for doing this is to try to bring to the attention of substantial number of other students – people who are not teachers and are not interested in teaching. We've got courses for them. If we are not doing that through this course-choice booklet, I'm not quite sure why we are doing it. But however, I recognise that it may be due to the challenge. Because it's getting over that title, the main thing, which for us is like death, the School of Education. But you know we can't change the title of the School, unfortunately, because it has such implications for all our other programmes.'

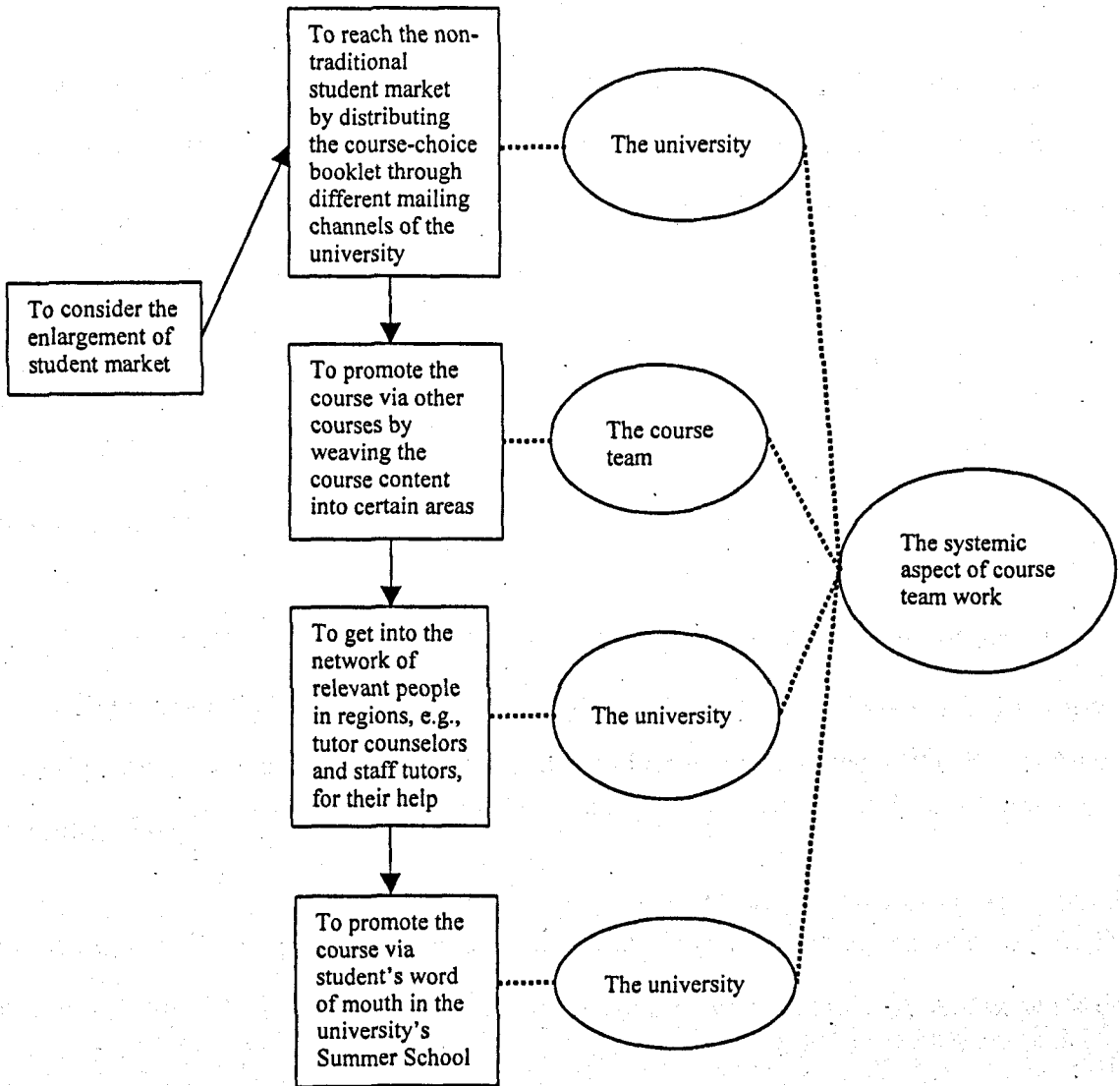
(Andy)

Connie afterwards suggested that the course could have same publicity in other courses if both course manager and project controller agreed to do it. This was because it might be possible to weave Course 3 into other areas. Louis supported her and pointed out that this was of mutual benefit to courses.

Rita then raised another viewpoint. She felt that it was important to get into the network of relevant people, e.g., both tutor counsellors on foundation courses and staff tutors in Faculty/Centre R and Q and M, who could help with the student's course choice. Ted (a BBC's TV producer) therefore suggested making contact with the team of Course 1 to draw on their experience. According to him, the Course 1 team was viewed by colleagues as the one that had successfully used a range of marketing initiatives for its first year of presentation. Rita on the other hand highlighted that the student's word of mouth was also a kind of publicity for the course.

Primary analysis of B3

In B3, the issue of 'the enlargement of the student market' stimulated the following discussion. The discussion was first concerned with the way of reaching the non-traditional student market. A suggestion was to distribute the course-choice booklet through different mailing channels within the University. The other idea was to promote the course via other courses. To do so, the course content could comprise certain areas that were shared with other courses. The next view shifted the focus into the network of relevant people who could help with course promotion. Both tutor counsellors and staff tutors were mentioned. Another opportunity to promote the course could be by word of mouth amongst students in Summer School. The primary analysis of B3 is illustrated in figure 6-9.



[Figure 6- 9] Primary Analysis of B3

The figure illustrates that the distribution of course-choice booklets through different mailing channels within the University in order to reach the non-traditional student market is apparently related to the practice of the University. Considering the suggestion that the course team could do the course promotion via other courses, i.e., to extend the content of course materials by linking with certain areas that are shared with other courses, is related to the work of the course team. Regarding the view of getting into the network of relevant people in regions, e.g., tutor counsellors and staff tutors, this is apparently related to the practice of the University, as is communication by word of mouth between students in Summer School.

To sum up, B3 was centred on a practical issue (namely, 'the enlargement of student market'). The discussions involved the considerations on the University, the course team and the faculty. It was apparent that they showed the systemic aspect of course team work. Most of talks could be categorised as practical talks. Only the discussion on promoting the course via other courses by weaving the course content into certain areas could be slightly linked to academic talk.

Discussion B4

Summary of B4

People at the meeting then shifted the focus of their discussion to the use of media for attracting the external audience. The use of television broadcasting for course promotion was firstly mentioned. Ted supported the idea and described a successful example from the other course.

Doris reminded other people in the meeting that there were only very small resources for the course. She felt that the course team wanted to do a considerable amount of work on course promotion. But, if so, a group of people and a huge amount of time were needed, such as the permanent marketing people who usually worked with a publisher. She in addition pointed out that the budget allocated to the course in fact should not be only used for the first presentation year but be spread over all presentation years.

The above consideration led Connie to suggest that the team should think of asking a publisher to do the course promotion. Tracy, however, pointed out that there were differences between the views of outsiders and insiders. The reason why she raised this concern was that she felt that the course team was now attempting to find out the possibility of having publicity both within the University's system for course construction and outside of the system.

Rita then suggested that the course had better only target the students in the University. Louis supported her but said that the course still might be able to get some new students

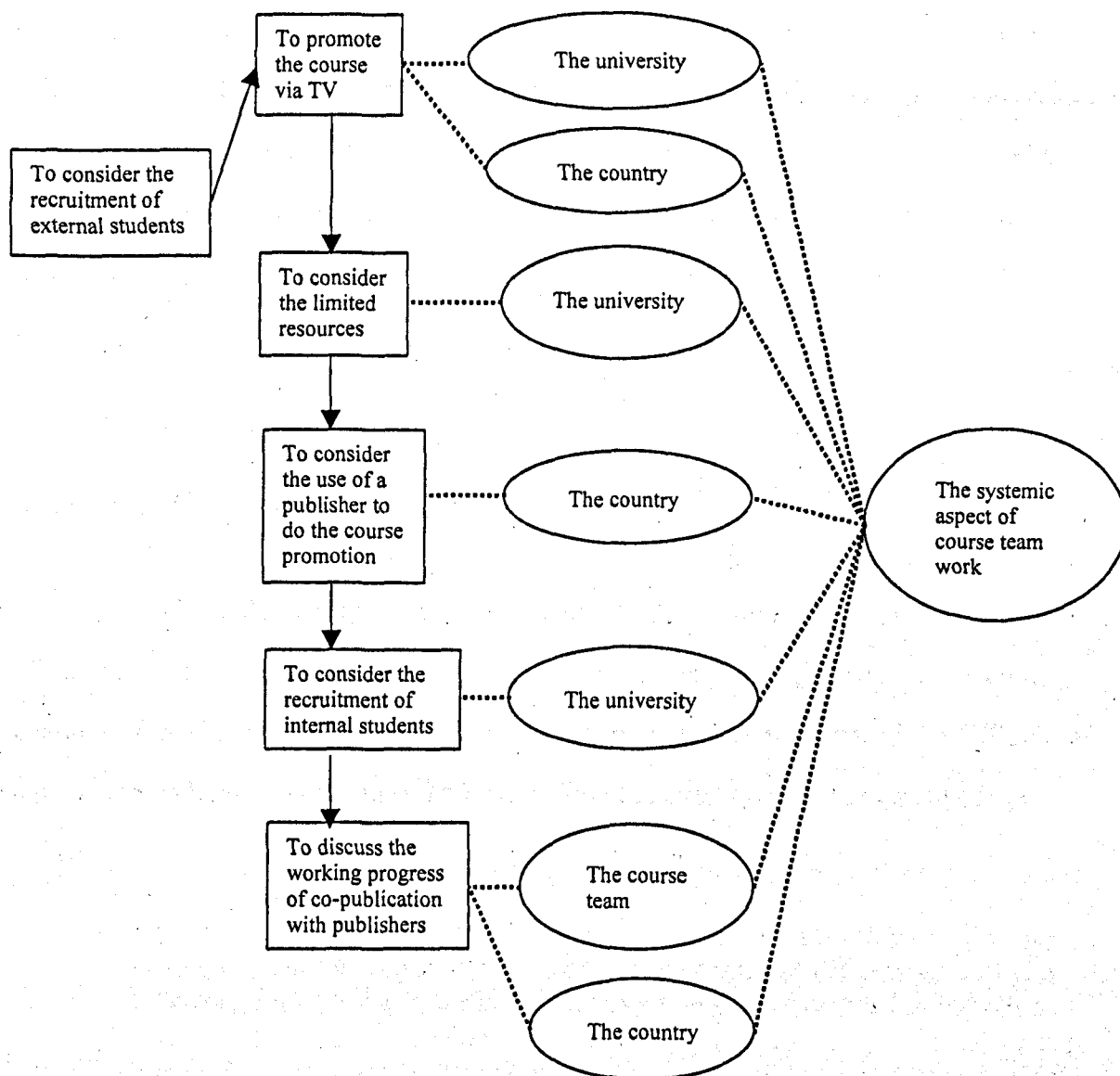
in addition to the prime audience. Doris hence suggested the team should write down all these emerging ideas and try to exploit them, not only for the first presentation year but also for other presentation years.

Ted followed the flow of discussion and asked about co-publication with publishers. In discussion, co-publication was described as an attempt to reach the outside public. Doris therefore explained how the marketing people in publishers organised book promotion. She also reported her latest progress of dealing with the matter of co-publication of the course. Several publishers were then named in the meeting as the possible collaborative partners with the course team.

Primary analysis of B4

The major discussions in B4 were around the issue of 'the recruitment of external students'. However, 'the recruitment of internal students' was also mentioned briefly.

The first suggested way to recruit the external students was the use of television broadcasting. This might prove too expensive since the course team had only limited resources. The next consideration was the use of a publisher to do the course promotion. It was then suggested that the course team had better only look at the recruitment of internal students. No follow-up talk was raised. But, the talk soon shifted to the co-publication with publishers for attracting the external public. The primary analysis of B4 is drawn in figure 6-10.



[Figure 6- 10] Primary Analysis of B4

The figure indicates that the use of television broadcasting for promoting the course would be related to the practice of the University and to the wider market in the country. Regarding the limited resources, it is apparent that this is a University matter. Using a publisher to do the course promotion would target people throughout the country who were not already involved with the University. The suggestion that the course team had better focus on internal students implies that the consideration rests on the University. With respect to the co-publication with publishers, it is apparent that this is based on the considerations of both the country and the course team.

To sum up, B4 is mainly centred on a practical issue (i.e., 'the recruitment of external students'). The other practical issue (i.e., 'the recruitment of internal students') emerged briefly. In general, the underlying considerations of the various diverse suggestions rested on the University, the country and the course team. It was apparent that they showed the systemic aspect of course team work. All these discussions would be categorised as practical.

Discussion B5

Summary of B5

Rita again led people to consider another aspect of course publicity, i.e., the various ways of recruiting internal students in the University. Rita said: '... might have to use some channels to reach them.' Following this, Connie immediately emphasized the difficulty if a course team hoped to do things differently from the existing marketing plan of the School.

'... them [i.e., the people who do the marketing work for the School] to say, "Oh, we don't want you doing that. It's not consistent with our overall plan. We want it all to be in booklet, or all to be on a mailing that's going out on such and such date. We don't want extra flyers put in." So you actually have to push very hard to get your own publicity, even if you are wanting to do it and you feel it's necessary.' (Connie)

Louis responded to Connie and claimed that: 'a lot of that constraint was because of money.' For supporting this view, he gave some examples from other courses that wanted to obtain money for independent publicity. He in the end stated that 'the only argument was where's money coming from?'

Tracy shifted the angle of consideration and talked about the printed flyer sent to existing students. She thought it was not a good idea to do so because 'really students get an enormous amount of stuff ... the student is inundated with literature.' Her further argument was related to both the mailing department and the warehouse. 'Everybody wants to do flyers. That was why it was stopped some years ago. Absolutely, the mailing department was told that they were not to continue. It was reported back, there was a

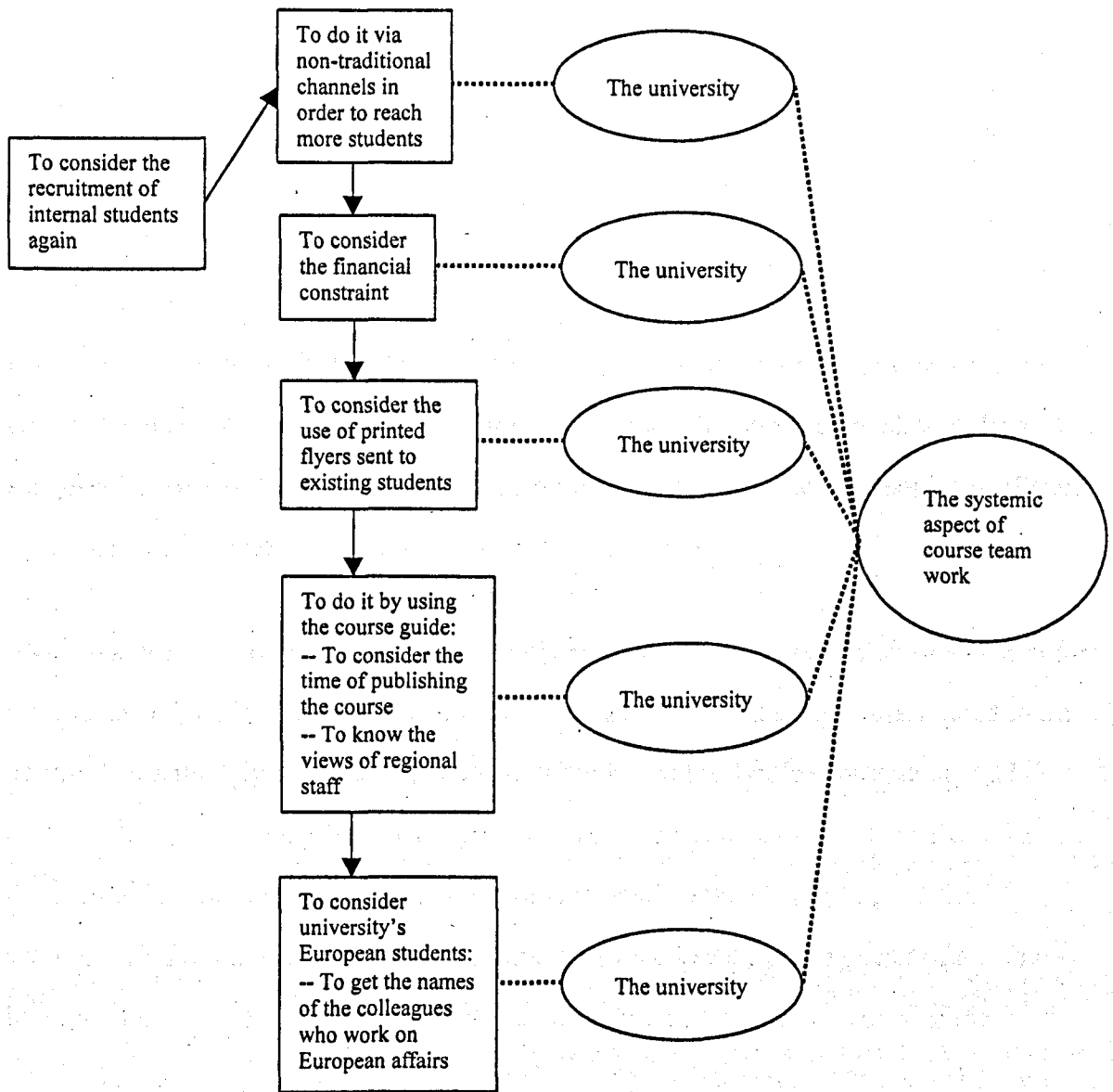
flyer in the warehouse to go. The mailing was stopped...' Rita therefore floated an alternative idea. For selling the course, she suggested that they could put the things into the course guide.

Rita later on suggested people should think again about this topic (i.e., 'publicising the course') but from some other angles, for example, the time of publicising the course. However, people in the meeting thought that they had first better get more understanding of this by talking with somebody, e.g., regional staff, who actually dealt with this.

Afterwards, Rita led people to consider the next new aspect, namely, University's European students. People in the meeting then named several people who were involved with University's European work.

Primary analysis of B5

This section of discussion is centred on the issue of 'the recruitment of internal students'. It is firstly considered by addressing the use of non-traditional channels in order to reach more students. This idea stimulates the reminder of the financial constraint that the course team is facing. Another consideration is the use of printed flyers sent to existing students. The other suggestion is to promote the course via the course guide. But the course team also needs to consider the time of publishing the course. It should also collect the views from regional staff. Eventually, the consideration of the University's European students also emerged. People in the meeting therefore suggested some names of people whose work is related to this. The primary analysis of B5 is illustrated in figure 6-11.



[Figure 6- 11] Primary Analysis of B5

The figure implies that the practice of using non-traditional channels to reach more students would be a matter for the University. This situation also applies to financial constraints, and also to the distribution of the printed flyers to existing students.

Regarding the use of the course guide to promote the course, this too would be related to the University, as would the suggestion of looking at the University's European students.

To sum up, B5 was centred on a practical issue (namely, 'the recruitment of internal students'). All the considerations were focused on the role of the University. They

showed the systemic aspect of course team work and the consideration of practical matters.

Discussion B6

Summary of B6

Rita then started to check if all the points written in an attached discussion paper had already been covered in the discussion. Regarding 'the other kinds of publicity', Rita suggested the use of 'Sesame' and 'Open House' (i.e., two internal newspapers published by the University, one for students and the other for staff).

As to 'the use of external contributors', Louis proposed both the provision of a launch for the course and the invitation of some celebrities to be involved in the work related to the course. Doris thought that the notice board might be useful. Louis subsequently had another idea. It was to get the review comments on their course-books. He believed that the efforts they would make on the course-books would enable them to get more students. This reminded Rita that she had recently received a printed poster of a course-book produced for the other course. The picture in the poster was the cover of the appropriate course-book. People in the meeting therefore started to talk about the time involved getting the cover of their own course-books designed.

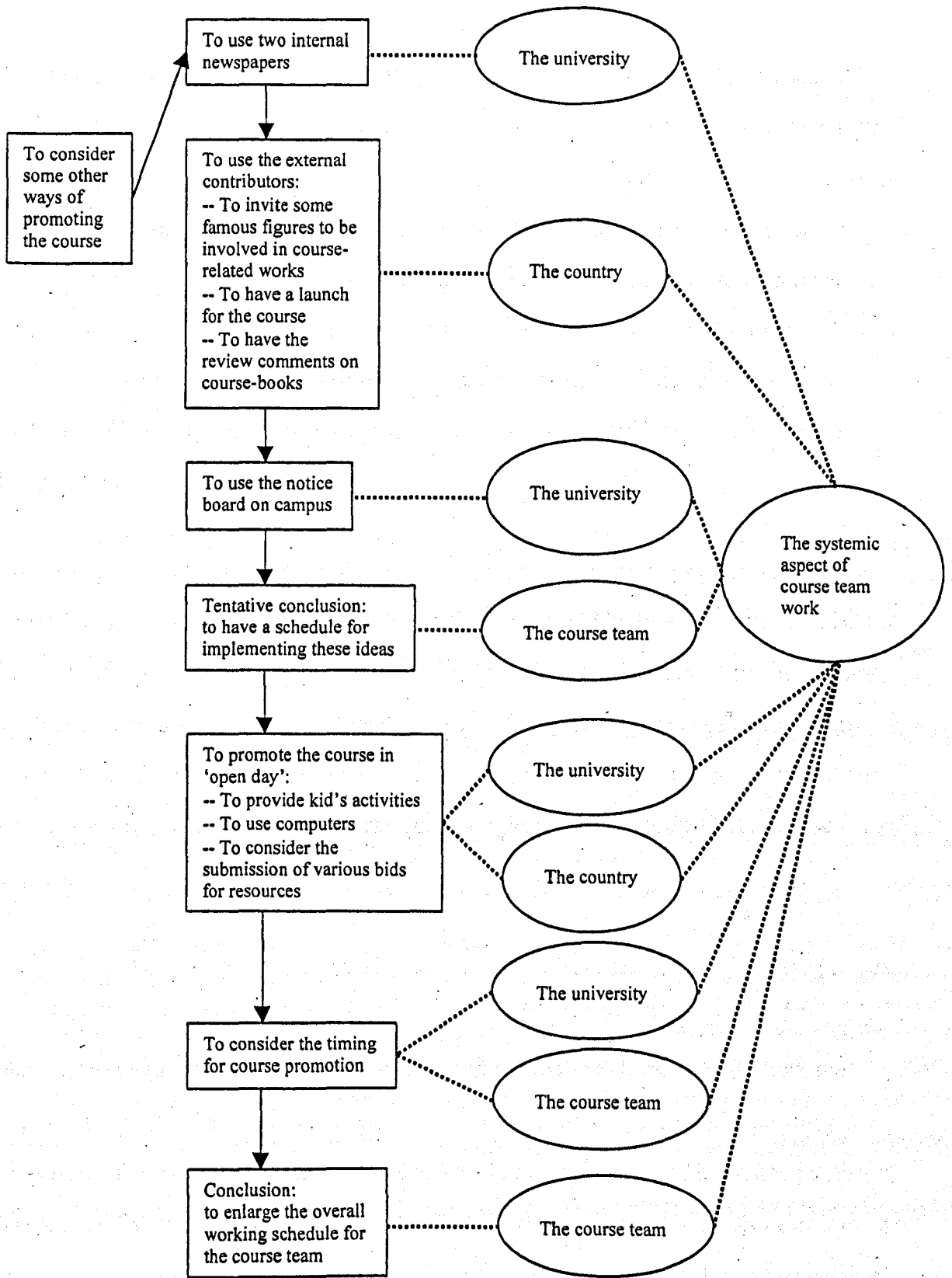
Rita then tried to end the discussion on this agenda item. She firstly concluded that the course team needed a schedule to implement these ideas. But Lisa whose mind seemed to still stay in previous discussion immediately reminded Rita that the use of 'open day' (i.e., a day in which the University opens its campus to the public) had not been mentioned yet. Tracy therefore took an example from the other department and suggested the provision of kid's activities that could attract parents to browse the promotion stuff provided by the course team on open day. Karen had another idea, namely, the use of computers to provide the publicity material during open day. Rita reminded others that if so, the course team needed to prepare bids for the use of video, audio, etc. Doris afterwards checked if the course team could get a publisher by the open day.

Louis then highlighted that 'the hardest thing is to get the minutes out' and 'pull them out at the right time' if the course team wanted to do course publicity. He therefore suggested: 'can we just have a running heading on the agenda every time?' Rita therefore replied that the course team needed to enlarge the overall working schedule and had an extra column in it, which was for the things about course promotion.

Rita now really wanted to close the discussion. 'Right, can we, I think we must finish before lunch time.' They therefore stopped discussing the issue of 'publicising the course'.

Primary analysis of B6

The last part of discussion started from the suggestion about considering some other ways of promoting the course. People first thought of the use of two internal newspapers. They also discussed the use of external contributors. For example, they could invite some well-known people to be involved in course-related work. They could have a launch for the course. They could also have the review comments on course-books. The next idea was to use the notice board on campus. Afterwards, the meeting chairperson initiated a tentative conclusion. It was to have a schedule for implementing these ideas. But, other people in the meeting still reverted back to the previous concern, i.e., the ways of promoting the course. They considered the use of 'open day'. In their minds, on that day they can probably provide kid's activities to attract parents to look at various materials promoting the course. They also might be able to use computers to promote the course. But the follow-up suggestion was that they needed to remember the difficulty of working on the bid for resources. A general view next emerged. It was that the course team should consider the timing for doing the course promotion. The meeting chairperson went along with the flow of talk and ended the discussion by stating a conclusion. It was to enlarge the overall working schedule for the course team by including all the suggested ideas of promoting the course. The Primary analysis of B6 is presented in figure 6-12.



[Figure 6- 12] Primary Analysis of B6

The figure indicates that the suggestion on the use of internal newspapers would involve the University administration. Regarding the view focusing on various ways of using the

external contributors, it can be said that it would comprise the considerations on the country. Regarding the suggestion to use notice boards on campus, it would be a University matter. With respect to the tentative conclusion, namely, to have a schedule for implementing these ideas, it was apparent that this would impact on the course team itself. Regarding various ways of using the 'open day', these suggestions would imply the considerations of both the University and the country. About the general statement to consider the timing of course promotion, the figure reveals that this is derived from the considerations on both the course team itself and the University house keeping. The final conclusion, i.e., the enlargement of overall working schedule of the course team by including all the suggested ideas of promoting the course, would be a matter for the course team.

To sum up, B6 was centred by both 'the consideration on other ways of promoting the course' and 'the attempt to make conclusions'. These could be treated as practical issues. In the discussion, people's talks imply the considerations of the University, the country and the course team. It is apparent that they show the systemic aspect of course team work. Most of the talks can be categorised as practical talks. Only the suggestion about having the review comments on course-books might be loosely linked to academic matters.

As a whole, these six parts of discussion in example B have tackled the following issues, i.e., the partner courses, the students from outside of the University, the use of Summer School, the negative effect of being a course located in the School of Education, the relationship with other courses, the connection with non-traditional students within the University, the use of media, the consideration of resources, the use of outside publisher, the print of flyers and posters, the use of its course guide, University's European students and the use of internal newspapers, notice boards and the 'open day'. It can be said that most of talks were derived from the standpoint of course management. The analysis identified that practical concerns were key elements in the discussions. These practical concerns have shown the systemic, interpersonal, personal and historical aspects of course team work.

6.4 Features of the process of working together as a team

This chapter focuses on the process of working together as a team in course team meetings. The analysis comprises two parts. Section 6.2 investigates the agendas of course team meetings. Section 6.3 gives two sets of examples -- one with five parts, the other with six parts -- for showing how people discuss in course team meetings. With the understanding gained from these two sections, it is found out that the process of working together as a team in course team meetings possesses the following two features.

- The agendas of course team meetings often include the practical issues concerning course management and course production.
- The course team meetings are flooded with practical concerns while the pedagogical concerns remain in the background.

These two features are detected by analysing the meeting agenda and observation data. They are discussed in details below.

6.4.1 Practical issues concerning course management and course production: Often included in the agendas of course team meetings

Regarding the meeting agendas that were the pre-structured outlines of course team meetings, the types of agenda items for course team meetings were identified in section 6.2. The overall analysis of meeting agendas signified that the course teams do plan to discuss various practical issues, which regard either course management or course production, together with academic issues. This finding revealed that in the minds of the course team chairperson and course manager who prepare meeting agendas, the practical issues should be tackled as a priority in order to develop the course.

The inclusion of practical issues on the agenda of course team meetings directly responded to the requirement of the University's system for course construction. It was also related to the working experience of both the course team chairperson and the course

manager. Hence, the practical items on meeting agendas of course team meetings show the systemic, personal and historical aspects of course team work.

6.4.2 Practical concerns: Flooding in course team meetings while the pedagogical concerns remain in the background

The formal course team work represented by the discussions in course team meetings is analysed in section 6.3. It highlights the importance of practical rather than pedagogical issues at these meetings.

A reason for this situation is that the courses that are investigated in this research are still in the early stage of course construction. Therefore, course team members have to consider various aspects including practical ones even for dealing with an academic agenda item. Nevertheless, the fact that course team members do raise practical concerns while they are discussing an agenda item cannot be erased.

The practical concerns raised in course team meetings signify that the University's system for course construction exerts its power on course team members. It also relates to how the interpersonal relationships work in course team meetings. Therefore, the practical concerns raised in course team meetings reflect the systemic, interpersonal, personal and historical aspects of course team work.

6.5 Summary of the findings

This chapter explores the process of working together as a team in course team meetings. There are two foci in this chapter: (1) the agendas of course team meetings; and (2) the discussions in course team meetings. It is found out in this chapter that the process of working together as a team in course team meetings possesses the following two features.

- The agendas of course team meetings often include the practical issues concerning course management and course production.
- The course team meetings are flooded with practical concerns while the pedagogical concerns remain in the background.

Chapter 7

The Development of Courses by Course Teams

7.1 Introduction

In Chapter 6, the reality of working in course team meetings is described. Then, how does the permanent staff perceive the course development conducted by course team members? After the interview data are analysed, it is apparent that the interviewees provide considerable insights into the following three issues.

- Working in the University's system for course construction
- Formation of courses
- Working together as a team

The first issue emerges from interviews, the second is deliberately raised by the researcher and the third is underlined in the interview outline. They are discussed respectively below.

7.2 Working in the University's system for course construction

In interviews, the permanent staff repeatedly and without any prompting talked about their work in relation to the university's system for course construction. Regarding this, they mainly mentioned the following three topics.

- Working schedules
- Resources: Budget and workers
- Workload

7.2.1 Working schedules

In the process of developing a course within the University's system for course construction, time pressures were very much apparent. To meet a deadline indicated the completion of a piece of work on time. This deadline pushed the whole work ahead. Thus, the arrangement of a working schedule became very important for a course team. It was already understood from Chapter 4 that there was a 'course planning calendar' produced by the University, which provided a general working schedule including university-wide yearly-based important deadlines. Moreover, Chapter 6 told that people in course team meetings often discuss the arrangement of detailed working schedules. What did the permanent staff think about the arrangement of detailed working schedules?

Firstly, the interviewees mentioned that the limited resources often constrain the arrangement of detailed working schedules. This meant that the lack of staff as well as the economical constraints increased time pressure. Under these circumstances, the sequence of carrying out work by different course teams for different courses could be different. For example, the course team of Course 3 decided to produce its television programmes earlier than the relevant printed course materials based on the understanding of the practice of the BBC that produced its television programmes.

'... That's simply the case of where the resources are ... We've had to spread load a little bit. ... Producers ... have to plan their workload as well. So, that's

why it's done in this way. ... The production year, the BBC operates from April through to March. Therefore, if you look at resources, in this case for TVx, must be spent or may be spent anyway, by the end of March. It's a financial thing, really.' (Rita, the course team chairperson of Course 3)

'If you've made the television first, then your teaching can teach around the television.' (Connie, the course manager of Course 3)

The above quotations implied that the detailed working schedule of the course team of Course 3 was arranged based on the availability of resources, not the academic consideration. In this case, the BBC was the prime concern. It was not necessary for the course team to schedule the work of writing the printed course materials before the work of producing the relevant television programmes. In other words, the course team had no such an academic consideration. What the course team considered were the key practical issues, such as, the availability of producers and the financial year of the BBC.

Furthermore, the course teams for arranging their detailed working schedules needed to bear in mind that the permanent academic staff in course teams might work on other course teams in the mean time. For example, the team of Course 3 was forced to shorten their production time due to a clash with an existing course team in the master programme, which shared a few permanent academic staff with the team of Course 3.

'Well, we did originally intend to have a longer production time. ... It was compressed because we had to wait for completion of a ...because [that course] involved [two course team members of Course 3].' (Rita)

On the other hand, a course team sometimes did not passively follow the University's regulations but actively included certain work that was not formally required by the system in its detailed working schedule with the purpose of raising the quality of the course. For instance, Course 2 arranged a meeting to pre-view a just-made television programme of the course. The course manager described the meeting as unofficial. The reason why this meeting was held was that the course team preferred to discuss the television programme before it was finalised and broadcast. In other words, for controlling the quality of the course, a pre-view meeting was added into the detailed working schedule of the team of Course 2. The following was the fieldnote regarding this meeting jotted down by the researcher.

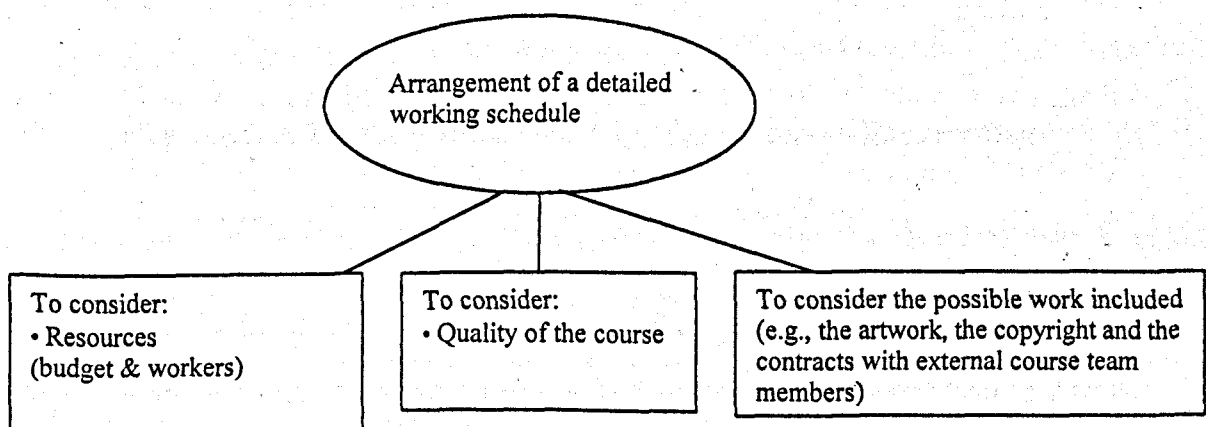
‘On the way to BBC building, Grace told me that the official requirement did not include this pre-view meeting. But, according to their experience, it had better hold this meeting because the course team then could avoid some unnecessary stuff put in by the producer and shown in television.’ (fieldnote)

All this told that it was human beings that arranged the detailed working schedules.

There was thus a possibility that the detailed working schedules of two course teams were different. A staff who had the experience of being a project controller expressed this view. In the following quotation, she pointed out that there were numerous things that needed to be done for making a course, for example, the illustration, the copyright and the contracts with external course team members. According to her, two course teams with different needs in the end developed two different detailed working schedules.

‘I mean, ... none of them would be able to be comparable, if only because you would have, perhaps, a different level of artwork illustration, copyright and author’s contract. ... I mean, there are so many facets of this, that never would you find a basic form. ... that’s a one-off. ... have to do it as an individual thing.’ (Tracy, a project controller)

To sum up, the detailed working schedule was an important device for a course team to push its work ahead. The interview data showed that when course teams arranged their detailed working schedules they considered the resources (i.e., the budget of the course and the available workers), the quality of the course and the possible work included (e.g., the artwork, the copyright and the contracts with external course team members). Figure 7-1 illustrates various considerations on the arrangement of a detailed working schedule.



[Figure 7- 1] Considerations on the Arrangement of a Detailed Working Schedule

The above figure shows that resources are highlighted. Since the permanent staff members consider the resources vital, the following discusses the issue.

7.2.2 Resources: Budget and workers

The resources for all the courses of the University are limited. This makes resources an issue for the course teams. Then, how influential are the resources to course team work? Here are some answers.

First, it was mentioned that without approved resources a course team could not be set up. To explain further, the formation of a course team was only possible when the money was confirmed. But, to get resources was not easy. One can see how difficult it was for the course team of Course 1 to get its resources in following quotations.

‘We put a lot of effort ... We had to justify why we needed them ... Once we got the money, to make the course was certain.’ (Catherine, the course team chairperson of Course 1)

Moreover, resources could influence how a course was put together. For example, when the course team chairperson of Course 2 was asked why the team chose the method of rolling re-make, he pointed out the limited resources. According to him, there was not enough available staff in the team to revise the course in one go. Therefore, the course team members had to carry out the work of up-dating the course portion by portion.

‘The availability of staff! We don’t have enough staff available to re-make it all at once. ... The most we can hope for is to have a small course team changing in membership working on a couple of blocks at a time. That’s the main reason.’ (Leo, the course team chairperson of Course 2)

Furthermore, the availability or lack of resources could also affect the sequence of conducting work. For instance, when an academic course team member of Course 2 was asked why the course team planned to re-make certain blocks of printed course materials first and do the work for other blocks later, his answer was that it was based on the

availability of money. This implies that some out-dated blocks would not but be put into the latter phases of rolling re-make due to budget limitations. The course team therefore had to select the blocks that most urgently need to be up-dated and put them into the first phase of the rolling re-make.

‘The money is only available for that block ... Whereas the other block may have bits in it that are out-of-date and should be brought up to date.’
(Douglas, a course author of Course 2)

Resources could also affect the method of producing course materials. For instance, when the course team members of Course 3 were asked why the team wanted to do co-publication, reasons were related to money.

‘Well, you get more resources for your course. ... So you know, there are those three reasons really, I think. One is the publishers themselves are putting money into the enterprise; ... And thirdly that we make money from the sale of the books.’ (Louis, a course author of Course 3)

‘There is a tendency towards courses being co-published anywhere in the University. What it means for the University in this case ... you can save some money by doing it. So, the financial reasons for doing it.’ (Rita)

There was another example. When a team member of Course 1 was asked why the radio programme of the course was shorter than the ones in predecessor Course 1P, his immediate response was that it was because of the shortage of money.

‘Money! The University wouldn’t give us money to make the longer radio programme.’ (Douglas, a course author of Course 1)

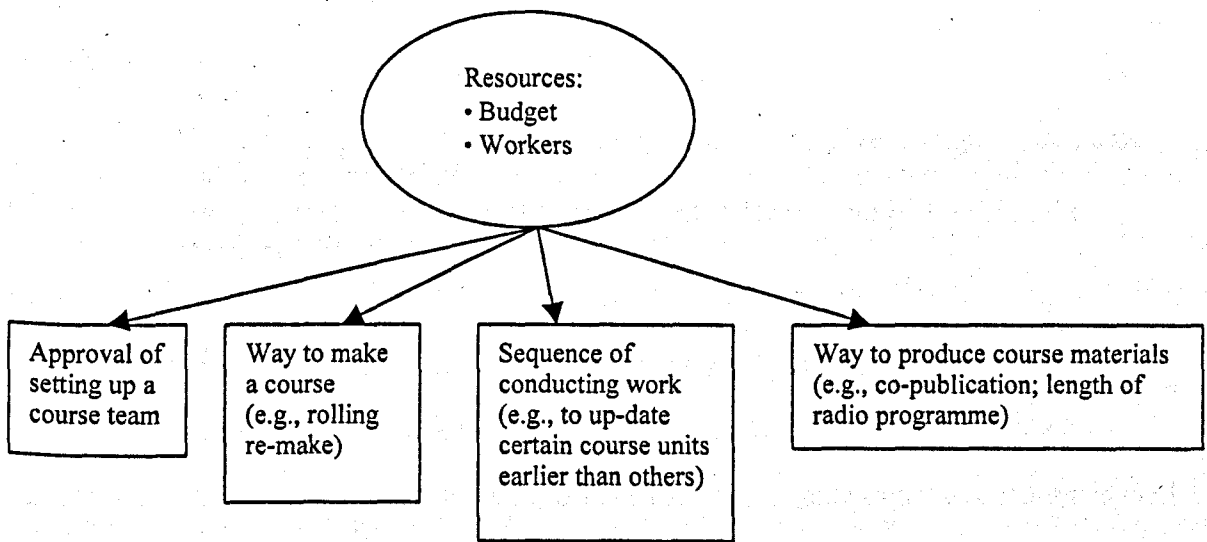
The chairperson of Course 1 was also conscious of financial pressures. According to her, a course team needed to work hard on bidding for audio-visual programmes.

‘You had to bid for the resources separately, such as a specific bid to the Audio Visual Sub-Committee if you want video tape or audio tape.’
(Catherine)

The factors indicate that the issue of resources is very important to course team work. Therefore, when the course team chairperson of Course 1 was asked if there were any other point which she wanted to raise before the interview ended, she replied that the tight resources must be the first one.

‘Obviously ... resources now are tighter than they have ever been. ... That must be the first one. ... Obviously the School had to feel that the course was worth funding.’ (Catherine)

To sum up, it was found out that resources including budget and workers were influential to course team work. To explain further, resources could influence the approval of setting up a course team, the way to make a course (e.g., rolling re-make), the sequence of conducting work (e.g., to do certain work earlier than other work) and the production of course materials (e.g., the adoption of co-publication, the length of radio programme). This situation is illustrated in figure 7-2.



[Figure 7- 2] Influences of Resources on Course Team Work

The above figure represents the influences of budget and workers on course team work. Apparently, among various workers who work for course teams, the core academic course team members play an important role. Since the interview data showed that the core academic course team members repeatedly talk about their workload, this situation is reviewed next.

7.2.3 Workload

The workload indicated the measurement of individual worker's time spent on his/her work. For a worker, the calendar year consisted of the working days and the days for

his/her leave and holidays. He/she either only conducted one project exclusively or divided his/her time between several pieces of work. Thus, how do the core academic course team members view their workload?

For a permanent academic staff, his/her workload is apparently linked with the concept of teaching. In open and distance education, a work project often conducted by academics is the writing of printed course units/chapters. But, the course team chairperson of Course 3 pointed out that the permanent academic staff also have to, for instance, provide academic input to audio-visual programmes and write the study guide. Thus, she thought teaching should not be merely equal to the writing of printed course units/chapters.

'That writing ... isn't all the teaching. Because they've also got to do some audio-visual materials ... they've also got to write the study guide around the course texts. ... The overall commitment is far beyond just writing the chapters.' (Rita)

Moreover, the core academic course team members needed to do managerial work (such as co-ordination) for their course teams. Thus, in order to arrange the work of a core academic course team member, the course teams needed to take this into account as well. The following quotation from a permanent academic staff in the course team of Course 3 typifies this viewpoint.

'Well, it varies. If somebody does a lot of co-ordinating of external consultants, you would bear that in mind. ... But if somebody only does unit writing, well, it would be more. ... You just balance them out.' (Louis)

The amount of work that a core academic course team member could do for his/her team also depended on the amount of other commitments (e.g., to work on other courses) that he/she has. If he/she had other commitments, his/her workload in the course team could be reduced. In other words, the workload of a core academic course team member was related to the scale of his/her overall work. But, from the viewpoint of a course team, what really mattered was the amount of input that a core academic course team member could give to the team, rather than his/her overall workload. Both the course manager of Course 2 and the course team chairperson of Course 3 addressed this.

‘About [the amount of] units a year, I would think, depends what other jobs they are doing.’ (Grace, the course manager of Course 2)

‘From the point of view of the course team, what matters to me is how many units people write for the course as a whole, not so much what their annual output is.’ (Rita)

Furthermore, the amount of work that a core academic course team member was allocated depended on the current stage of course construction. For instance, the ‘production course team’, rather than the ‘presentation course team’, had more work for a core academic course team member to do.

‘It’s not how long the course is offered for. It’s while it’s produced. Because once the course is in presentation, there would be other measures.’ (Connie)

It was also included in interview data that in reality the amount of work that a core academic course team member had actually conducted might be different from that in the original plan. This was because the practice, following its development, continued changing. If things did not happen as planned, a core academic course team member often could not but take on some unplanned work. As a result, it was felt that it was difficult to firmly fix the workload of a core academic course team member. For instance, a core academic course team member of Course 3 pointed out the uncertainty of the measurement of core academic course team member’s workload. There was ‘a lot of juggling’, he said.

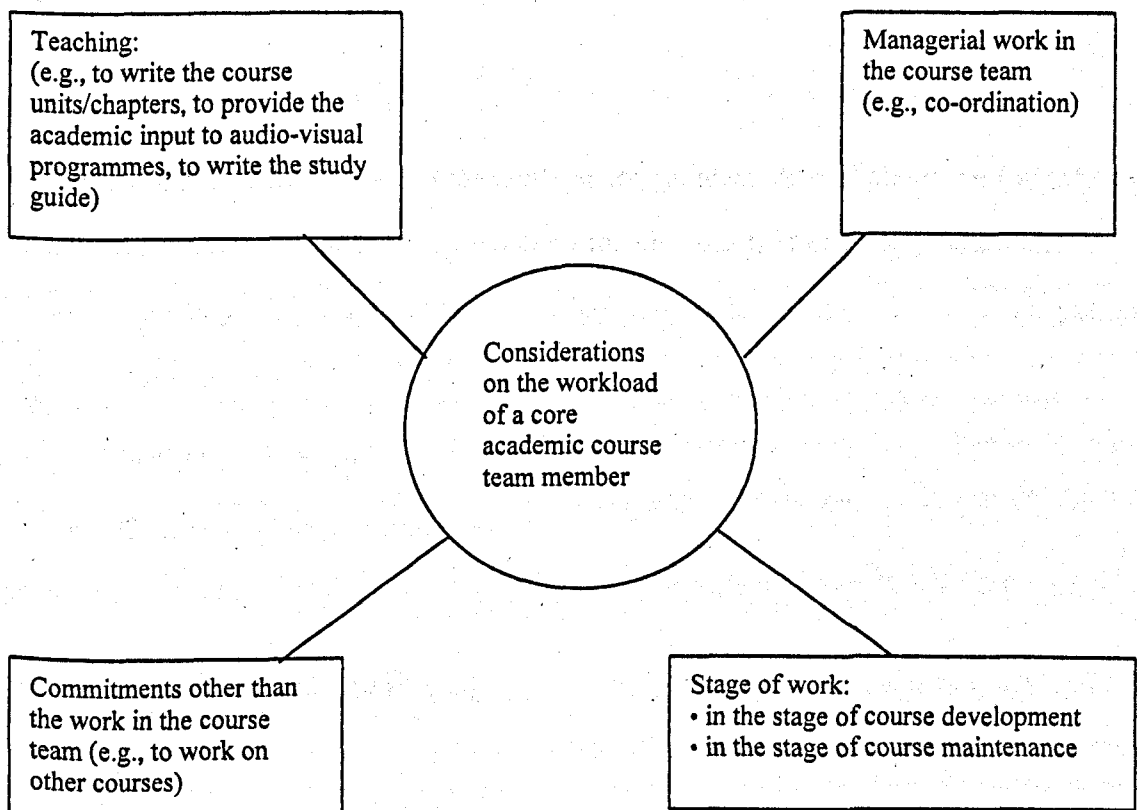
‘A bit of uncertainty, too. If you can’t get the external consultant that you want, you may end up having to write that bit yourself, and get someone else to write the bit you would have written. Yes, you’ve got to juggle. A lot of juggling. Cause ... you’ve just got to see who you can get.’ (Louis)

A similar viewpoint emerged from interview data. That is, the real workload could be different from what was written in official documents. The following two quotations showed how two course team members of Course 3 thought about the workload in this way. The feeling implied in the second quotation is that it was difficult to say what the exact workload a core academic course team member had.

‘In practice, it doesn’t work out as neatly as that. That’s what you do on paper. I don’t think anyone’s workload plan actually mirrors the work that they really do on the ground.’ (Rita)

‘Well... you can’t. It depends because the work itself is a mixture of ... doing various activities. ... It’s difficult to say exactly what the workload is. But you are not meant to exceed.’ (Louis)

To sum up, the core academic course team members have assessed their workload from various perspectives. Their considerations comprised the concept of teaching (e.g., to write the printed course units/chapters, to provide the academic input to audio-visual programmes, to write the study guide), the managerial work in course teams (e.g., co-ordination), the commitments other than the work in the course teams (e.g., the work for other course teams) and the stage of work (i.e., in the stage of course development, in the stage of course maintenance). The considerations on the workload of a core academic course team member are illustrated in figure 7-3.



[Figure 7- 3] Considerations on the Workload of a Core Academic Course Team Member

As a whole, section 7.2 reports the reflections of permanent staff on working in University's system for course construction. It is found out that they mainly concern the issues of working schedules, resources (i.e., budget and workers) and workload. To arrange the detailed working schedules for their course teams, they consider resources, the quality of the course and various possible work included. The influence of resources is detected from the approval of setting up a course team, the way to make a course (e.g., rolling re-make), the sequence of conducting the work (i.e., to up-date certain course units earlier) and the way to produce course materials (e.g., co-publication). Regarding the workload of a core academic course team member, the concerns comprise the concept of teaching (e.g., to write the course units/chapters, to provide the academic input to audio-visual programmes and to write the study guide), the managerial work in the course team (e.g., co-ordination), the commitments other than the work in the course team (e.g., to work on other courses) and the stage of work (i.e., either in the stage of course development or in the stage of course maintenance).

7.3 Formation of courses

In interviews, the permanent academic staff in course teams talked about the formation of the courses. What they often mentioned were the changes that had happened in the School, University, UK and other countries. Thus, the relevant interview data are put into following two groups.

- Institutional changes
- Changes in bigger external environments

7.3.1 Institutional changes

It was mentioned in Chapter 2 that the course team was the basic academic unit of the University. And Chapter 4 has reported that the School of Education has already undergone various changes after it was set up. Could there be any link between the

institutional changes happened in the School and University and the courses? The relevant investigations into the permanent staff are reported in the next section.

Firstly, the changed student market of the School could affect the provision of its courses. One example is Course 3. A permanent academic staff in the course team of Course 3 pointed out that the students market for undergraduate courses of the School had already changed. Traditionally, teachers mainly consisted of the student market for the undergraduate programme of the School. But in the follow-up trend, teachers instead wanted to get master's degrees, not the first degree anymore. The School thus shifted its focus to its master programme. In the mean time, it tried to re-define a new student market for undergraduate courses. The course team of Course 3 noticed this change. It hence attempted to design the course and extend the student market by aiming at, for instance, the students who usually take courses provided by other faculties.

'In the past, the undergraduate courses [of the School] have been aimed at practising teachers. But that market for students has changed... Nowadays, all teachers have [their first degrees] and the market really shifted to MA courses for teachers. So, we've been thinking more in terms of the general undergraduate student market that's served by the other faculties. And one of the areas that we are aware which isn't covered well is [area J]. Course 3 is thus going to aim at it.' (Louis)

Moreover, the development of the University could influence the structure of a course. For instance, a permanent academic staff in the course team of Course 2 mentioned that the University had already been extending its provision of education into continental Europe. This development involved his course team with the need for inclusion of European issues in the course. He felt that it was sensible for his team to do so since the University had already broadened its territory by including continental Europe.

'[Regarding the inclusion of European issues,] there is also a general thing about the University, too. The University is very much extending its actual teaching activities throughout Europe. There are quite a lot of students who are located in Brussels, in Berlin, in Paris and so on. ... It seems sensible to go ahead on that path.' (Arthur, a course author of Course 2)

Country 1 was the other example. According to its course team chairperson, the course already contained the materials about the Europe. It was the course team itself that

brought out the idea, not forced by the University, since the team already sensed that the course would have students from Europe.

‘There is no pressure [from the University]. [The inclusion of European issues] was initiated by us ... We certainly not assumed that all our students would be just British citizens residing in Britain.’ (Catherine, the course team chairperson of Course 1)

To sum up, the permanent staff in course teams noted the changes that had happened in the School and University, such as the changes in student markets. They had designed the courses in response to institutional developments.

7.3.2 Changes in bigger external environments

Have the changes in bigger external environments (i.e., in the UK and other parts of the world) also affected the formation of the courses? To get the answer, awareness of course features is first needed. It is understood that all three courses investigated in this research were from the School of Education. For the courses about ‘education’, the link between the courses and the changed bigger external environments might be easily detected. The opinions of the permanent academic staff in course teams are summarised below.

Firstly, the courses could reflect changes in the country (in this case, the UK). On the one hand, the national changes could be systemic and visible. For example, the permanent academic staff in the course team of Course 2 pointed out that the radical changes in the British educational system since the Education Reform Act passed in 1988 pushed the course team to introduce the new national educational framework in the course. This was because the predecessor Course 2P was produced before the British educational system was drastically changed by the 1988 Act.

‘... is really because of the development in the educational system. ... The pace of change since 1988 has been very fast, faster than ever before, I am sure, in British education.’ (Leo, the course team chairperson of Course 2)

‘The general idea ... came from the unfortunate fact that [the predecessor Course 2P] was being produced in sort of 1986, 1987 and 1988. During those years, at least, the English educational system was turned upside down by the

so called Education Reform Act 1988 ... So things were constantly changing as we were trying to write about them.' (Arthur)

The other example was Course 1. The following quotations tell us that there was a new system of vocational education and training, a changed attitude of young people and changed institutions for adult education in the UK when Course 1 was planned. Since all these changes became important to British society after the predecessor Course 1P was designed and presented, the course team of Course 1 decided to tackle the new practices in British vocational education and training, further education and adult education.

'For example, [the predecessor Course 1P] was compiled before the idea of National Vocational Qualification. It didn't take account of that.' (Douglas, a course author of Course 1)

'Several changes have taken place [in colleges for further education]. They have been the changes... with a decline in adolescent population ... how a college is going to respond to that?' (Rosa, a course author of Course 1)

'There was one block in particular [in predecessor Course 1P] the people thought it should be up-dated immediately which is about the institution [for adult education] which has been changed very great deal.' (Catherine)

On the other hand, the changes in a society could be ideological and needed to be discerned carefully. For instance, according to an academic course team member of Course 1, his course aimed at presenting the changes in the concept of adult education -- from focusing on 'personal development and leisure' to 'training and qualifications and competencies'.

'Partly because the concept of adult education has been changed. Previously it is mainly thought of in terms of personal development and leisure. Now it is thought of, entirely, in term of training and qualifications and competencies and so on. The other is still there. But it is regarded as less important than the professional relationship with education. ...' (Douglas)

There is the other example. An academic course team member of Course 1 pointed out that the academic course team members of Course 1 and its predecessor Course 1P viewed the issue of 'student autonomy' differently. Under the circumstances, Course 1 provided more 'guidance' to students; whereas Course 1P treated 'student's freedom' as the most important element of adult education.

‘[In the predecessor Course 1P], the ideological view being that student freedom was the most important element of adult education. Everything that helped to maximise student choice was a good thing. ... Whereas in Course 1, there is a little more proscription, and a little more belief that while student choice is a good thing, they do need some guidance and they need to acquire some basic knowledge before they can make choices. ... Most of the assessment in Course 1P was concerned with the project that the students did entirely subjected to own choice in consultation with their tutor. Even in the examination it was possible for them to ignore some of the blocks and choose to concentrate on others. ... In Course 1... the TMAs [i.e., tutor-marked assignments] particular, there were much more emphasis on student’s demonstrating that they had read the course text with understanding.’
(Douglas)

The above quotation implies that the changed educational ideology can influence not only subject matter but also pedagogy. In this case, the predecessor Course 1P gave students less knowledge and more freedom to explore things whereas Course 1 provided students with more knowledge and guidance. The predecessor Course 1P allowed students to construct their own assessments whereas Course 1 concentrated on evaluating the type of knowledge a student had learnt. The above comparison revealed that the academic views in these two successive courses were not identical although these two courses dealt with the same topic. This situation reflected the changed focus in the field of study at least in British society.

In addition, courses could be influenced from other parts of the world. For example, the integration of Europe gave impetus to the course team of Course 2. The course thus included the new concept of Europe.

‘At the time when the course was planned, the UK seemed to be becoming a much more central and integrated part of Europe than it had been before. The single market came into effect in 1992, removing a very large number of barriers ... within the European community. ... This has implications for education.’ (Leo)

The other kind of foreign influence was the collaboration between the University and an educational institution in foreign country. Course 3 is the case. The following quotations tell us that the University decided to put Course 3 into its collaboration scheme with Country X. Since the course would be exported, the course team members started to

consider the extension of the scope of subject matter and take its students in Country X into account.

‘Beatrix who is [an officer of the University with the responsibility of managing] external affairs ... has been approached by [Country X] to get a course in [academic area J] ... She has heard of our course [which is in academic area J] ... So...’ (Connie, the course manager of Course 3)

‘And we become involved in the OU programme in [Country X]. ... So, that’s changed, if you like, the kind of course work we are writing.’ (Louis)

To sum up, the permanent academic staff in course teams directed the courses to respond to the new developments in both the UK and other parts of the world. This phenomenon showed that they took the bigger external environments into account when they design their courses.

As a whole, section 7.3 reports how the permanent academic staff who work in course teams think about the formation of courses. It is apparent that they consider the relationship between the courses and changed environments (i.e., the ones in the School, University, the UK and other parts of the world). This phenomenon implies that they believe that their courses should not be abstract at all and should reflect the changes taken place in either institutions or bigger external environments.

7.4 Working together as a team: Issue of academic autonomy

In this study, people worked together at least in course team meetings. There, they exchanged ideas and made final decisions on the development of their course for the team. It was shown in Chapter 6 how people really work together in course team meetings. Also, Chapter 5 has reported the reflections of permanent staff in course teams on the link between course team work and the interpersonal relationship in a course team. From both chapters, we know that the course team members interact and influence each other when they work together as a team. This section further delineates what the permanent academic staff in course teams thought about working together as a team.

One important feature of working together as a team was the provision of comment on the work of academic course team members with the purpose of integrating the course and raising the quality of the course. At the UKOU, an academic course team member often provided/received comments either in verbal or written forms, particularly on the writing of course materials, to/from other members of the team. The comment could be a criticism, support, question and so on. Whether the comment was positive, negative or neutral, it expressed a viewpoint. The acceptance of comment confirmed the formation of an integrated course team.

'If everybody is terribly light minded, you could get a very bland product at the end. If people are critical, it can be productive but then one could reach compromises that people aren't happy with entirely all round. So it's a difficult balance.' (Rosa, a course author of Course 1)

With respect to the integration of a course team, the interviewees tackled the issue by talking about the academic autonomy in a course team. This involved exchanging ideas for developing a course. Also, it indicated the establishment of consensus.

'Consensus ... I think, in one phase, they didn't ... It wouldn't be an exaggeration to say that by the end of the course one member of the course team would regard ... as an enemy.' (Douglas, a course author of Course 1)

The academic autonomy of course team members was characterised by the freedom to select and present course materials. In conventional universities, academics can prepare and provide their teaching in lecture rooms by following their own will. But, at the UKOU, it is the course team, not an individual academic, that develops a course. Then, how did the course team members think about their academic autonomy in a course team? After the relevant data were analysed, it can be seen that the following two different attitudes exist in the minds of the interviewees.

- The academic autonomy of academic course team members should be restricted.
- In practice it was difficult to restrict the academic autonomy of academic course team members and there was no need to restrict it.

Regarding the first attitude -- i.e., that the academic autonomy had to be restricted -- it was derived from the belief that a course should be integrated. Integration was featured by, for instance., the coherent theme, the united approach to an academic issue, the similar tone of presentation and the close link among teaching media. The integration of a course indicated the integration of a course team. For a course that was produced by a group of people and delivered by various media, team integration became crucial.

'Basically, we are not autonomous as authors. We have to accept that. Everyone has to accept that as a condition of working for the OU. You are not writing your own book or your own article for a journal. You are writing a part of a course. And the needs of the course have to take precedence over any kind of personal desire to do something or other. There's no point having thirty little master pieces if the course doesn't work as a course.' (Rita, the course team chairperson of Course 3)

This quotation implied that the reduction of academic autonomy was perceived by the interviewee as a condition of working in a course team of the University. So, an academic course team member must put the needs of the course in front of his/her own. This is an attitude towards the ideal course team. 'What a course team should be' is central to that attitude.

An indication of integration was the formation of consensus that was characterised by the real acceptance of the decisions made by the course team. The academics who possessed the first attitude towards academic autonomy in a course team aimed to reach a consensus. The consensus of a course team was based on the agreements of all course team members. For those people who believed that the consensus was essential for a course team, the method of voting to get the final decisions might be used. Voting sometimes could be controversial, and was very much influenced by who was present at key meetings. To promote a consensus, what had been agreed and disagreed in previous meetings and recorded in the minutes was often checked and re-addressed. An example could be found from the Course 1 team.

'A lot of time does come down to the vote. Sometimes it depends on who was there and who wasn't there at the meeting. ... Sometimes it was a bit controversial. We actually had to go back to the minutes to check what we had agreed and what we hadn't agreed yet.' (Paul, a course author of Course 1)

The former part of the second attitude (i.e., the academic autonomy of academic course team members is difficult to be restricted) was generated from the understanding of the reality. In the case of Course 1, the predominant feeling was that there was compromise rather than consensus in the course team.

‘I don’t think there ever was really consensus. No, I think, there was compromise. I am pretty sure there was compromise at the end really. I mean there was agreement about some issues and not others but I think the fundamental differences of opinion have remained. ... ’ (Rosa)

An academic course team member of Course 2 also noted that in general the academic course team members often did not produce their course materials by exactly following the consensus of their course team. According to them, the decision made in his course team was not accepted with unanimous approval of course team members.

‘Even if ... agree in their criticism, they will usually not express it in exactly the same sort of way. Partly because, you know, they are very different people. They see the same thing in a different light. They also want to be different from each other, say, something original. ... So, in order, if you like, to direct and control academic labour, well, I don’t know, it’s very difficult. That’s all I’d say, because the author is the author. ... We are not the unanimous. ... The autonomy starts at the end of the meeting. He goes away and he does what he likes. ... A course team is like a parliament, if you like. ... It can decide; but it can’t execute its decision.’ (Arthur, a course author of Course 2)

The above quotations imply that in reality a completely integrated course was hard to find although it was hoped that course team members could fully reflect the consensus of their course team. The reason was that a course team consisted of people who had different minds. Particularly, it was felt that the academic course team members were not easy to direct and control. Thus, academics preferred to act as individuals. That was why it was said that ‘the author is the author’. Academics in this sense possess certain academic autonomy in their course team. This made the integration of a course difficult.

The latter part of the second attitude (i.e., there is no need to restrict the academic autonomy of academic course team members) was derived from a belief that a course should be treated as the place where academics discuss issues from different perspectives. For instance, an academic course team member of Course 1 thought that it

was not good if a course provided by the School of Education only offered a single perspective to students.

‘I think if [the integration of a course] was necessary, then the OU courses in “education” wouldn’t have worked; they wouldn’t have been possible, because it is different from one person getting up and lecturing in a university. If I was lecturing in a university to students directly, then they would get my views; and everyday that they came to listen to me, I would be giving my views. ... But on the other hand, in an ordinary university, they would hear different professors lecturing, and they may disagree. And that’s in some ways the equivalent. ... In a sense, an OU course, which is meant to be the only one that a student is doing, is meant to cover the equivalent of a number of courses in an ordinary university. ... Because the OU has such an influence on thinking in education, it would have been very dangerous if all the courses have been integrated. As it was, most of the other universities and the colleges of education in the ‘70s just simply used to base their courses on OU courses, because it saved them having to plan curriculum.’ (Douglas)

In the above quotation, the interviewee mentioned that a course of the UKOU, according to his judgement, covered the equivalent amount of course materials in several courses taught in a conventional university. Since he thought that the courses in conventional universities were taught by different academics with different views and that the course materials developed by the UKOU also influenced conventional universities, it would be dangerous if a course of the UKOU only consisted of one single perspective. In other words, a course team, according to him, should not confine the academic autonomy and should allow a course to contain a number of academic perspectives.

For those academics that possess the second attitude towards the academic autonomy in a course team, both the possibility and the necessity of reaching consensus in a course team were doubted. In their mind, it was difficult to have consensus in a course team. Rather, compromise emerges. Even it was thought that there was no need to get consensus.

‘Well, the previous course weren’t so integrated; and this course is not likely to be so integrated. Whether that’s a problem is arguable.’ (Leo, the course team chairperson of Course 2)

‘I don’t think that it’s looking for a consensus. It’s just a collection of different units, some of which will have quite different political view from others. ... It’s up to student to decide which one he is more convinced by.’ (Douglas, a course author of Course 2)

In above quotations, an interviewee does not think that a course is fully integrated because the academic course team members still work in their own ways after course team meetings and do not exactly execute the decisions that are made by their course team. One interviewee questioned the necessity of integrating a course, whilst another stated that his team did not attempt to get consensus.

A point emerging from the above quotations is that students were the receivers of view(s) included in course materials. No matter which attitude towards the academic autonomy in a course team that an academic course team member possesses, students were the ones who received the view(s) provided in course materials. If a course were developed by the academic course team members who possessed the second attitude towards the academic autonomy in a course team, students would study the course materials that comprise several perspectives.

Under the circumstances, were students expected to integrate different perspectives? In the case of Course 2, it is said that the students who took the course were not expected to integrate different perspectives.

‘What we can’t reasonably do is to expect students to be better at integrating in different perspectives than we ourselves are. If we ourselves can’t integrate [the perspectives of Disciplines U and Y] on some issues ... it’s not reasonable to expect students to do that.’ (Leo)

We can see from the above quotation that the Course 2 team does not expect their students to generate an integrated view because the academic course team members themselves are unable to do so.

Did students themselves have the ability to judge different views provided in a course? It was said that students of Course 2 sometimes could evaluate various views presented in course materials produced by the course team.

‘Sometimes, yes. If you read the exam papers, that was very true. I was very heartened by the way that some of the students actually didn’t agree with the course team in their examination answer.’ (Grace, the course manager of Course 2)

According to the above quotation, students might not agree with certain view(s) offered in course materials. This phenomenon was detected by the interviewee when she marked the examination papers -- some answers provided by students showed that they disagreed with certain academics who produced certain parts of course materials.

As a whole, section 7.4 reports the reflections of permanent staff in course teams on working together as a team. A feature of course team work is the facility to comment. The acceptance of comment forms the basis of consensus that confirms the integration of a course team. The issue of integration is tackled by interviewees from the angle of the academic autonomy of academic course team members. In this study, the interviewees have two different attitudes towards the academic autonomy of academic course team members. The first is that the academic autonomy of academic course team members should be restricted. It is because it is believed that a course should be integrated. The second view is that it is in reality difficult to restrict the academic autonomy of academic course team members and that there is no need to restrict this autonomy. If a course is produced by the people with this attitude, it may be not fully integrated. In summary, these identifications signify that the issue of academic autonomy of academic course team members is important in the provision of a course but the key issue remains unresolved.

7.5 Features of course development by course teams

This chapter deals with the development of courses by course teams. There were three themes in this chapter. In section 7.2, the course team members consider their work within the University's system for course construction. In section 7.3, the course team members explain how they formulate their courses by linking with the changes in external environments. And in section 7.4, the course team members express their views on the issue of working together as a team. With the above understanding, the following three features of the development of courses by course teams are identified.

- The system for course construction set up by the University frames the work of developing courses.
- The awareness of changing external environment drives the development of courses.
- There are different views on the academic autonomy of academic course team members.

These three features are detected from the interview data collected in the fieldwork. They are discussed in details below. To verify them, they are compared with the data collected from post-fieldwork interview.

7.5.1 System for course construction set up by the University: Framing the work of developing courses

From the report on the reflection of the permanent staff in section 7.2, it can be seen that practical concerns exist in their mind when they, after the course team meetings, talk about working in University's system for course construction. This phenomenon responds to Chapter 6 that indicated that practical concerns were raised from time to time in course team meetings. This finding was generated based on the realisation that the interviewees have mentioned time (e.g., working schedules), resources (i.e., budget and workers) and workload when they talk about their work in the University's system for course construction.

The reflections on practical issues after course team meetings signify the power of the University and the position of interviewees at the University. Since the permanent staff was not freelance workers, they could only work within University guidelines. That was the reason why they raised the practical concerns when they talked about their work in course teams.

To sum up, this phenomenon shows the systemic aspect of course team work. It also indicates the personal aspect of course team work.

Can this feature be found out from another course team? The post-fieldwork interview provides the following example from the course team of Course 4Z in Faculty Z.

'It seemed a lot of decisions were being driven by the needs of the bureaucracy of the University rather than by academic criteria. For example, we had to decide at a very early stage how many TV programmes we wanted. We simply didn't know it; but we were asked to do that. ... It wasn't until a year ago that we began to have a clear idea of what we might use TV for and what roles it might play within the course. But by then we had already committed ourselves to a certain number of TV programmes. And there was nothing we could do to change that. There's a whole range of things where you have to say at a very early stage how many of these you want, how many pages and how many diagrams. In fact it's very difficult to make those decisions until you start working on the course. And all of those make it quite difficult to produce a high quality academic course when so many decisions are driven by guesswork without any real serious consideration of the academic issues.' (Lucia, the course team chair of Course 4Z in Faculty Z)

The above quotation shows that Course 4Z was developed under constraints from the bureaucracy of the University. For meeting the deadlines in the University's working schedule, certain decisions on course development needed to be made earlier than in the best time. This situation signifies the power of the system for course construction set up by the University and responds to this finding.

7.5.2 Awareness of changing external environment: driving the development of courses

Section 7.3 has reported the reflections of permanent academic staff in course teams on the formation of courses. It showed that they addressed the changes in environments when they talk about their courses. This was because they linked the formation of courses with both the institutional changes (i.e., the ones in the School of Education and within the UKOU) and the changes in bigger external environments (i.e., the ones throughout in British society and in the other parts of the world).

A reason why the permanent academic staff in course teams mentioned the changes in environments is that these three courses investigated in this study are based on existing

courses. With the understanding of the course history, they need to deal with the new developments in environments in order to get course approved.

The fact that environmental changes are taken into account signifies the sociocultural aspect of course team work. It is also related to the historical aspect of course team work.

Can this feature be detected from another course? In post-fieldwork interview, it was addressed that the reason why Course 4Z in Faculty Z needed to be offered was because the society had changed. (see below)

‘It wasn’t going to be easy to update it because it wasn’t just that the examples would have to be changed but the whole ethos behind the course had changed. The whole Thatcher era had happened, market economics was much more important, the structure of organisations had changed very dramatically, so much had changed that it was almost as if every paragraph of the course was going to need to be changed to make it.’ (Lucia)

The above quotation showed that Course 4Z was made due to the substantial change in society. Thus, the course team of Course 4Z developed the course by changing almost all the paragraphs in predecessor course. It can be seen that the situation of the course team of Course 4Z echoes the finding of research into courses within the School of Education.

7.5.3 Academic autonomy of academic course team members: Different views on it expressed

Section 7.4 reports the reflections of permanent academic staff in course teams on working together as a team. It can be seen that the interviewees tackled the issue by addressing the academic autonomy of academic course team members, which was crucial to the provision of a course.

The two attitudes towards the academic autonomy of course team members (i.e., ‘the academic autonomy should be restricted’ and ‘the academic autonomy is difficult to restrict and there is no need to restrict it’) showed the characteristics of the interviewees and their course teams. The course team members with the first attitude might produce a

tightly integrated course. The course team members with the second attitude might make a course that would not be fully integrated.

The integration of a course team thus signified the interpersonal aspect of course team work. It also showed the personal aspect of course team work.

Could this feature be found out in another course team? The following example from the course team of Course 4Z in Faculty Z regarded how a course team should look like.

Although it did not directly show the view about the integration of a course team, it related to the issue and was worth being mentioned.

'The course team was quite a formal kind of organisation, I think. In the sense that we only really met to discuss business things and most of the rest of the business was conducted on one to one basis between various people. ... it turned out because of time pressure. ... we didn't really have proper academic discussions. And I think too there was no real sense of course team identity. ... no sense of really getting to know people on the course team or really getting to know what interested them about the course. ... I think that's sad because one of the payoffs of the course team system is that for the duration of the course you can form quite close relations which are very satisfying and really make the work a lot more interesting. ... The course team ... it's no longer an academic enterprise; it feels like a production process. ... Because course teams are so small, there's no longer the range of expertise to put into a course. ... Everybody is working under very high pressure which means that it's very hard to be innovative, to take time to think things through very carefully. It feels like all the time ... having to make compromises in order to get stuff done in an acceptable form. The high-pressure means that the kind of things academics value which is good quality argument and discussion and exploration really get sidelined.' (Lucia)

The above quotation showed how Lucia looked at a course team. In her mind, a course team should be full of good quality academic discussions. However, the time pressure to complete the work of course development limited the innovation in the course.

Moreover, she believed that a course team should develop the close interpersonal relationship between course team members, which is the foundation for building up the identity of the team. It can be said that Lucia's view on the nature of a course team could supplement the debate on the academic autonomy of course team members addressed in this finding.

7.6 Summary of the findings

This chapter explores the development of courses by course teams. There are three foci:

(1) working in the University's system for course construction; (2) the formation of courses; and (3) working together as a team. It is found out in this chapter that the development of courses by course teams possesses the following three features.

- The system for course construction set up by the University frames the work of developing courses.
- The awareness of changing external environment drives the development of courses.
- There are different views on the academic autonomy of academic course team members.

Chapter 8

Discussions and Conclusions

8.1 Introduction

This study explores the nature of the course team approach at the UKOU by investigating the teams and the work of the teams. In this thesis, Chapter 4 provides the background information about the courses of the UKOU. It also introduces the system for course construction set up by the UKOU. Chapters 5, 6 and 7 present the empirical data analysis, which show the reality of course team work. Within them, Chapter 5 reports how the course teams are actually formed. Chapter 6 presents the real pictures of working together as a team in course team meetings. And Chapter 7 focuses on the development of courses by course teams.

The major findings of the empirical work can be grouped according to the three research foci -- the formation of course teams, the process of working together as a team in course team meetings, and the development of courses by course teams -- as follows:

- (1) Regarding the formation of course teams, it is found out that the birth of a course team is regulated by the protocol of course approval and is derived from the efforts of

individual members of staff. Academic's personal attributes, such as personality and the area of expertise, form a basis of the organisation of course teams. The distribution of responsibility in a course team is featured by the vaguely demarcated responsibility of core course team members who are the permanent academic staff. And the course team members' experience of working together underlies their current work in course teams.

- (2) With respect to the process of working together as a team in course team meetings, it is found out that the agendas of course team meetings often include the practical issues concerning course management and course production. The course team meetings are flooded with practical concerns while the pedagogical concerns remain in the background.
- (3) As to the development of courses by course teams, it is found out that the system for course construction set up by the University frames the work of developing courses. The awareness of changing external environment drives the development of courses. However, there are different views on the academic autonomy of academic course team members.

This chapter discusses these major findings and provides some concluding remarks. It also provides some reflections on the conduct of this study. In summary, this chapter consists of the following three main sections.

- Discussion on the findings
- Concluding remarks
- Reflections on the conduct of the study

8.2 Discussion on the findings

There are altogether nine major findings generated from Chapters 5, 6 and 7. They are discussed in this section by comparing with the literature reviewed in Chapter 2 as well as with the documents analysed in Chapter 4. Since they cover three research foci, the

discussion in this section is divided into the following three parts, that correspond to the three research foci.

- Formation of course teams
- Process of working together as a team in course team meetings
- Development of courses by course teams

8.2.1 Formation of course teams

The first group of major findings, concerning the formation of course teams, comprises four major findings.

The first major finding -- ‘the birth of a course team is regulated by the protocol of course approval and is derived from the effort of individual members of staff’ -- is generated from Chapter 5. It can be connected with the description of the UKOU’s system for course construction delineated in section 4.5. The finding tells that the approval of a course takes place within the framework of the system. However, without the effort of individual members of staff, the provision of the course cannot be approved stage by stage. The personal strength is implicit within the ‘course-planning calendar’ formulated by the system. This study thus gives a vivid example of it, which presents that the birth of a course team is not only controlled by the top-down University’s system but it is also derived from the bottom-up effort of individual members of staff.

The second major finding -- ‘academic’s personal attributes form a basis of the organisation of course teams’ -- is produced in Chapter 5. This finding points out the importance of personal feelings, perceptions, motivations, commitments, academic backgrounds and lives of academic course team members to the organisation of course teams. This is because the data show how academics’ specific interests, prior experiences, employment status, personal circumstances, other commitments or re-locations from the School to another faculty/university/country affect the composition of course teams. In comparison, the official Production Handbook introduced in section 4.5 does not mention academic’s personal attributes. The literature on the organisational

aspect of course teams -- e.g., Farnes (1991), Borremans (1996) -- reviewed in section 2.5.2 does not address academic's personal attributes, either. Thus, this finding fills the gap in existing understanding.

Moreover, this finding implies that academic team member's perception of the size of a team -- rather than the total number of people working for a team -- is considered when the size of a course team is discussed. No matter how many people work for a course team, if an academic course team member perceives that his/her course team is small, he/she says that the team is small. Academic team member's perception of the size of a course team is not mentioned by the literature (e.g., Batten, 1980; Stanford, 1980; Gagan, 1981; Lawrence & Young, 1979; Wright, 1988; Stringer, 1980; Tight, 1985) reviewed in section 2.5.2. These articles only discuss the advantages of as well as the disadvantages of specific course teams described as 'large' or 'small'. Since this study shows how academic course team members relate their perceptions of the size of their teams to their work, this finding deepens our understanding of the issue of the size of a course team.

Furthermore, the perception of the size of a course team is linked with the number of permanent academic staff in the team, not the total number of people working for the team. In this study, the importance of having enough permanent academic staff in a course team is pointed out. If it is felt that the number of permanent academic staff in a course team is not enough, the team is considered to be small. This finding responds to Mason and Goodenough (1981), reviewed in section 2.5.2, who also addressed the involvement of permanent academic staff in a course team. Unlike their writing, this study that discusses a case study shows how the permanent academic staff actually influence the work in a course team. Thus, this study provides a clear example of this concern.

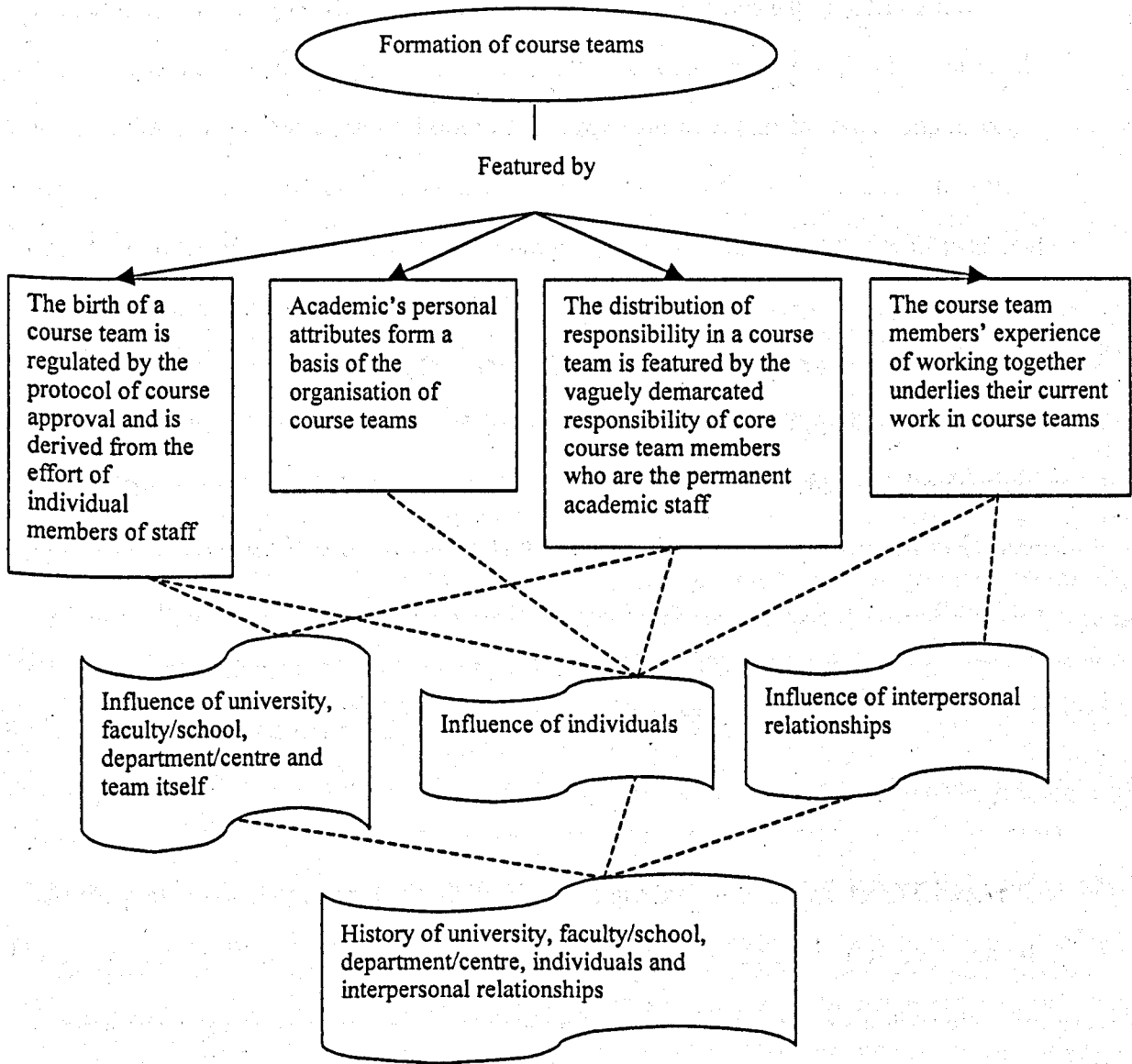
The third major finding -- 'the distribution of responsibility in a course team is featured by the vaguely demarcated responsibility of core course team members who are the permanent academic staff' -- is produced from Chapter 5. This does not fully correspond to the regulation provided by the system for course construction described in UKOU's Production Handbook. Rather, it emphasizes the human side of the formation of course

teams. The discussion on this finding can be linked with the debate on Fordism, neo-Fordism and post-Fordism (Badham & Mathews, 1989; Campion & Renner, 1992; Raggatt, 1993; Renner, 1995; Rumble, 1995a, 1995b, 1995c, 1996) reviewed in section 2.3.3. A feature of post-Fordist groups is that the core members are entrusted with a high level of labour responsibility. The course teams are like the post-Fordist groups and are organised by several core members who are the permanent academic staff of the University. In order to make their teams survive in UKOU's Fordist system for course construction, these core academic team members have to take on more tasks and extend the range of their responsibilities.

The fourth major finding -- 'the course team members' experience of working together underlies their current work in course teams' -- is drawn from Chapter 5. This finding has some parallels with the outcomes reported in Nicodemus's (1992a) study reviewed in section 2.5.2. Nicodemus highlights the importance of the psychodynamic perspective to the psychology of course teams. This study shows the other side of human aspect of course teams, namely, the interpersonal relationships between course team members. The relationships influence their current work in course teams. Hence, this finding can supplement the existing understanding.

These four findings indicate the influence of the historical development of various entities -- the organisation (i.e., the UKOU), the faculty/school (i.e., the School of Education), the department (i.e., the Centre within the School), the individuals (i.e., the staff members of the UKOU) and the interpersonal relationships between staff members - involved in the formation of course teams. How the university, the faculty/school, and the department/centre have been developed through time, dictates how the course teams are set up. The individual staff members, who have been working in the institution and on course teams for many years, bring in their understanding of the formation of course teams into the current practice. Some course team members, through the experience of working together with other course team members, have built up a pattern of working with others in their current teams. It is apparent that these historical factors influence the formation of course teams.

To sum up, it can be said that the formation of course teams possesses the following four features. (1) The birth of a course team is regulated by the protocol of course approval and is derived from the effect of individual members of staff. (2) Academic's personal attributes form a basis of the organisation of course teams. (3) The distribution of responsibility in a course team is featured by the vaguely demarcated responsibility of core course team members who are the permanent academic staff. (4) The course team members' experience of working together underlies their current work in course teams. Both the power and the history of university, of faculty/school, of department/centre, of course team itself, of individual team member and of interpersonal relationships between team members influence the formation of course teams. The discussions on the features of the formation of course teams are illustrated in figure 8-1.



[Figure 8- 1] Features of the Formation of Course Teams

The above figure attempts to show the inter-relationship among the various factors involved in the formation of course teams, such as the power as well as the history of university, faculty/school, department/centre, course team itself, individuals and interpersonal relationships between team members. These influential factors are important to understand how the course teams are formed.

8.2.2 Process of working together as a team in course team meetings

The second group of major findings, relating to the process of working together as a team in course team meetings, consists of two major findings.

The fifth major finding -- 'the agendas of course team meetings often include the practical issues concerning course management and course production' -- is generated from Chapter 6. It is found out that both course management and course production issues are often included in the agendas of course team meetings. This means that the course team chairpersons as well as course managers notice the importance of practical issues for the development of their courses. They know that course development is not simply academic work. In their understanding, course development also includes a number of practical issues. The identification of the importance of practical work can relate to Lewis and Meed (1986) who pointed out the importance of scheduling activities against time (reviewed in section 2.4.2). But, the existing literature reviewed in Chapter 2 does not include the analysis of the agendas of course team meetings. This finding thus contains a new awareness of course team work and it can widen the existing understanding of the actual work of course teams.

The sixth major finding -- 'the course team meetings are flooded with practical concerns while the pedagogical concerns remain in the background' -- is drawn from Chapter 6. The empirical work showed that the course team meetings consisted of many practical concerns; and the pedagogical concerns only appeared occasionally. People in the course team meetings sometimes discussed considerable practical matters even when they dealt with non-practical agenda items, such as, the shape of a block of course units. Therefore,

this finding cannot link with the literature reviewed in section 2.4.1 on the theoretical underpinnings of distance teaching -- such as guided didactic conversation (Holmberg, 1983, 1999) and transactional distance (Moore, 1983, 1993) -- which tells the importance of pedagogy. For the course teams investigated in this study during the period of data collection, pedagogy was not the main concern.

Why the pedagogy was not the main concern in the course team meetings during the empirical work of this research? (1) Could it be that the course teams concentrated on practical matters, rather than pedagogy, during the period of data collection, and they focused on pedagogy at other stages of course development? This study cannot provide the evidence to prove or disprove this; further empirical studies are needed to find out whether that was the case. (2) The other possibility is that the course team members might have put pedagogy into brackets and did not treat it as an important matter that needed to become the central concern of course team meetings. Probably, the course team members who were the permanent academic staff of the UKOU already automatically included their pedagogical knowledge into their writing. Based on their long-term experience of working together, they knew how other academic course team members would prepare their course materials. Thus, they took pedagogy as granted and did not focus on pedagogy in course team meetings. If this is the case, it shows how important the individual academic's personal attributes to course team work are. Since pedagogy is not the primary concern in course team meetings, individual academic member himself/herself controls the provision of pedagogy and decides how pedagogy is provided.

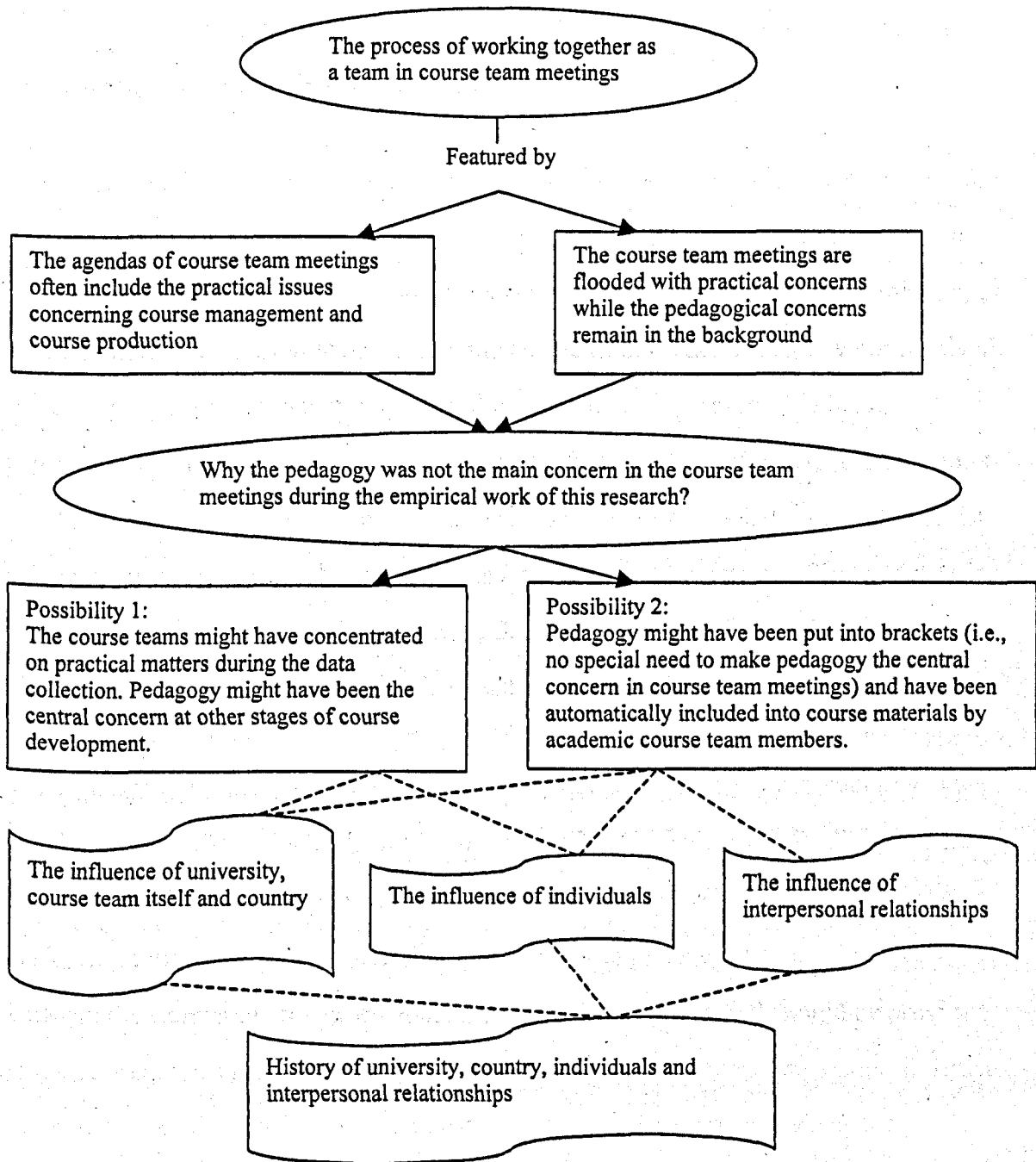
These two findings point towards the influence of the historical development of the various components involved in the course team work: the history of the University, of course team itself, of the country (i.e., the UK), of individuals and of interpersonal relationships between the team members. Because the system for course construction at the UKOU has been developed since the University was set up, both course team chairpersons and course managers who are the senior staff members have already noticed the importance of the inclusion of practical issues. Based on the long-term working

relationships between course team members, the participants of course team meetings have learnt what and how to discuss with others in meetings. The attributes of individual course team members and the implicit interpersonal relationships between participants of course team meetings further affect the development of discussions in meetings. Moreover, the process of discussing in course team meetings shows that the participants of meetings have already got used to giving and taking comments to and from others. Debate and discussion have been a part of the culture and professional life of these academics, traits that have been cultivated in education since their childhood. The country thus influences the process of working together as a team in course team meetings.

Therefore, it can be said that on the one hand the investigation into the practical course development (Gay, 1985; Holt, 1996; Morgan, 1991; Riley, 1984a, 1984b, 1984c; Schwab, 1978; Walker, 1971a, 1971b, 1990) reviewed in section 2.4.3 is important. On the other hand, the practical course development is apparently different from the guidelines on course development (Freeman & Lewis, 1995; Lewis, 1971a, 1971b, 1971c, 1972; Lewis & Meed, 1986; Rowntree, 1994) reviewed in section 2.4.2. Nevertheless, this study can be slightly linked with the literature on the guidelines on course development, e.g., Lewis & Meed (1986) that addressed the importance of course management.

To sum up, it can be said that the process of working together as a team in course team meetings possesses the following two features. (1) The agendas of course team meetings often include the practical issues concerning course management and course production. (2) The course team meetings are flooded with practical concerns while the pedagogical concerns remain in the background. Two reasons can explain why pedagogy was not the main concern at least during the data collection. (a) The course teams might have concentrated mainly on practical matters, rather than pedagogy, during the period of data collection. Pedagogy might have been the focus at other stages of course development. (b) Academic course team members might have put pedagogy into brackets -- i.e., there is no special need to make pedagogy the central concern in course team meetings -- and

the academics might have automatically incorporated the pedagogical aspects in the actual writing process. The flood of practical concerns in the course team meetings reflects the power as well as the history of university, course team itself, country, individuals and interpersonal relationships between team members. The discussions on the features of the process of working together are illustrated in figure 8-2.



[Figure 8- 2] Features of the Process of Working Together as a Team in Meetings

The above figure highlights the power as well as the history of university, team itself, country, individuals and interpersonal relationships on the process of working together as

a team in course team meetings. These influential factors cannot be ignored if the research interest is the process of working together as a course team.

8.2.3 Development of courses by course teams

The third group of major findings is about the development of courses by course teams. There are three major findings in this group.

The seventh major finding -- 'the system for course construction set up by the University frames the work of developing courses' -- is obtained from Chapter 7. The course team members are deeply concerned about their working schedule, resources and workload, as reflected in their talk about their work in the course teams. Therefore, the work involved in developing courses is apparently shaped by the University's system for course construction. Although a course team is considered to be a kind of post-Fordist group, its flexibility is constrained by the control imposed from the system that represents Fordist characteristics. Thus, it can be said that this finding shows the feature of industrialisation in distance education reviewed in section 2.3.3. It provides an example for Peters's (1983) claim that distance education is industrialised.

The eighth major finding -- 'the awareness of changing external environment drives the development of courses' -- is drawn from Chapter 7. This finding can be discussed from Tyler's (1949) rationale reviewed in section 2.4.1. The discussions are divided into two.

(1) Tyler's rational model suggests that 'the learning experiences that can interact between the learner and the external conditions in the environment' should be provided in the curriculum. This finding shows that the academic course team members construct their courses by responding to the changes in external environment, such as the government policies. Thus, this study in this respect echoes Tyler's rationale. (2) Tyler's model highlights the importance of educational objectives and suggests the development of educational objectives as the first main area of curriculum development. However, in this study, the educational objectives of courses did not become the central concern of course team meetings during the period of data collection although the work of course

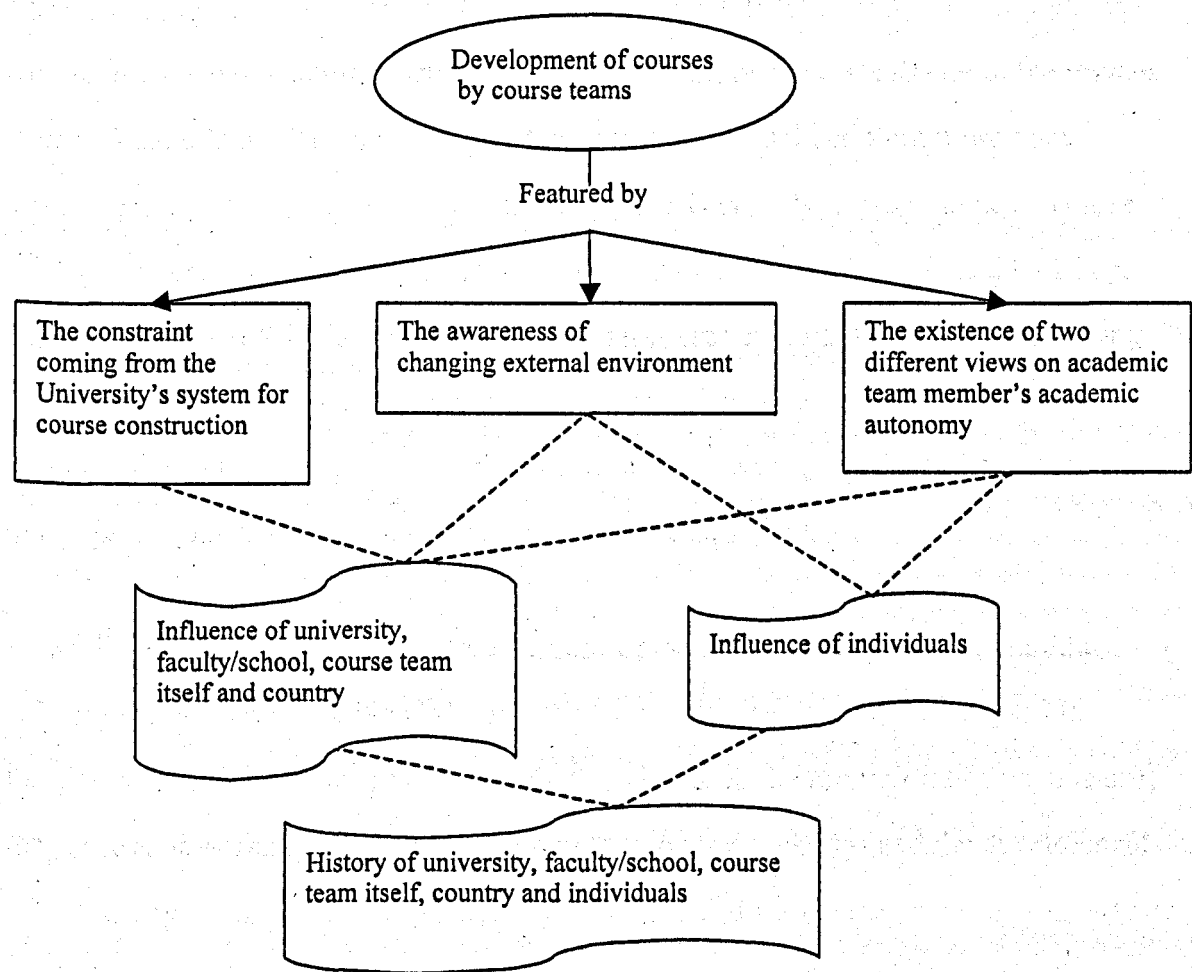
teams was in the early stage of course development. Thus, regarding Tyler's advocacy of the provision of educational objectives, this study shows that the educational objectives of these courses are possibly provided in course materials without going through serious discussions in course team meetings.

The ninth major finding in the empirical work -- 'there are different views on the academic autonomy of academic course team members' -- is generated from Chapter 7. This finding falls into the arena of the existing debate on academic autonomy of academic course team members (see section 2.5.2). In comparison, the first view drawn from the data of this study (i.e., that the academic autonomy of academic course team members should be restricted) is parallel to the suggestions of Perry (1976) and of Mason and Goodenough (1981). The second view identified in this study (i.e., that the academic autonomy of academic course team members is difficult to be restricted and even there is no need to restrict the academic autonomy of academic course team members) echoes the claims of Wright (1988) and Harris (1987). These two views represent academic members' different personality, working experiences and beliefs in teamwork. If the key academic course team members share the same view on academic autonomy, a course can be developed easily.

These three findings show the influence of faculty/school, of course team itself, of country and of individuals into the development of courses, from historical perspective. As far as the history of the faculty/school is concerned, the faculty/school has changed its policies, e.g., it adopted its policies according to the changes in the student market (see section 4.4.2), which affects the development of courses. As far as the individuals are concerned, as the members become more experienced and more senior, they notice the changes happening in the faculty/school, and their reflections on these changes can influence their courses developed by their teams. In terms of the courses and course teams, they both have historical precedence. The predecessor courses and predecessor course teams have an influence on the current course teams and current courses. From a broader perspective, the educational policies of the country are changing in accordance with the emerging needs of the society, which the course team members have to take into

account in developing their courses. Certain course team members have already developed their views on academic team member's academic autonomy. Their views reflect their experiences of working in a course team. It is thus apparent that these historical factors influence the development of courses by course teams.

To sum up the above discussion, it can be said that the development of courses is featured by (1) the constraint coming from University's system for course construction, (2) the awareness of changing external environment and (3) the existence of two different views on academic team member's academic autonomy. The development of courses by course teams signifies the power as well as the history of university, of faculty/school, of team itself, of country and of individuals. The discussions on the features of the development of courses by course teams are illustrated in figure 8-3.



[Figure 8- 3] Features of the Development of Courses by Course Teams

The above figure highlights the power as well as the history of faulty/school, course team itself, country and individuals on the development of courses by course teams. These

influential factors are the keys to the understanding of course development by course teams.

Since this group of findings are related to the development of courses, a further discussion can be based on the empirical studies conducted by Riley (1984a, 1984b, 1984c, 1983) and Walker (1971a, 1971b, 1990) reviewed in section 2.4.3. In comparison, there are similarities and differences. Regarding the similarities, (1) this study supports some of Riley's 'private factors' (such as beliefs, commitments and team interaction). Also, this study echoes Walker's platform (e.g., values, beliefs and assumptions) highlighted in his naturalistic model for curriculum development. (2) This study addresses some of Riley's 'public factors' (e.g., university policies, official team size and team spread). As to the differences, (1) this study identifies the influence of interpersonal relationships on the overall course team work. Although Riley's study similarly points out the influence of team interactions, it treats the team interactions as one of the private factors. Walker's model only addresses the importance of deliberation; it does not directly mention the interpersonal relationships. (2) This study not only looks at course team work but also it sheds light on team's formation that is not investigated by Riley, nor by Walker. (3) Riley's study only focuses on course authors' behaviours of drafting course materials. Walker's study concentrates on the strategies of deliberation in curriculum development projects. This study not only investigates the reality of course development but also shows the importance of rational system.

As a whole, section 8.2 discusses three groups of major findings by linking with the existing literature reviewed in Chapter 2 as well as with the documents analysed in Chapter 4. These three groups of major findings focus on the formation of course teams, the process of working together as a team in course team meetings and the development of courses by course teams. In general, it can be said that the course teams as well as their work are affected by the power and the history of university, of faculty/school, of department/centre, of team itself, of country, of individuals and of interpersonal relationships between team members.

Based on the above discussion, the next section presents the conclusions of the study.

8.3 Concluding remarks

In this section, the conclusions are firstly generated by theorising above-discussed findings. A discussion on the theme of conclusions follows next. Two conclusions are further discussed respectively: contextualised course teams and contextualised course team work. A discussion on the transferability of conclusions follows afterwards. Finally, the overarching research issue (i.e., the nature of the course team approach) is discussed. In other words, this section consists of the following six parts.

- Conclusions of the study
- Discussion on the theme of conclusions -- context/contextualisation
- Discussion on conclusions -- contextualised course teams
- Discussion on conclusions -- contextualised course team work
- Discussion on the transferability of conclusions
- Discussion on the research issue -- the nature of the course team approach

8.3.1 *Conclusions of the study*

This study explores the nature of the course team approach at the UKOU with focus on the formation of course teams, the process of working together as a team in course team meetings and the development of courses by course teams. For drawing conclusions, nine major findings are compared. After comparison, this study concludes that *course teams are contextualised, and their work is also contextualised*. In other words, the course team approach is characterized by *contextualised course teams* and *contextualised course team work*.

Table 8-1 firstly illustrates the emergence of the conclusions from nine major findings.

[Table 8- 1] Emergence of Conclusions from Major Findings

Major findings		Conclusions				
		Context				Contextualisation
		Systemic context	Interpersonal context	Personal context	Historical context	
Formation of course teams	(1) The birth of a course team is regulated by the protocol of course approval and is derived from the effort of individual members of staff.	✓		✓	✓	Contextualised course teams
	(2) Academic's personal attributes form a basis of the organisation of course teams.			✓	✓	
	(3) The distribution of responsibility in a course team is featured by the vaguely demarcated responsibility of core course team members who are the permanent academic staff.	✓		✓		
	(4) The course team members' experience of working together underlies their current work in course teams.		✓	✓	✓	
Process of working together as a team in course team meetings	(5) The agendas of course team meetings often include the practical issues concerning course management and course production.	✓		✓	✓	Contextualised work of course teams
	(6) The course team meetings are flooded with practical concerns while the pedagogical concerns remain in the background.	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Development of courses by course teams	(7) The system for course construction set up by the University frames the work of developing courses.	✓				
	(8) The awareness of changing external environment drives the development of courses.	✓		✓	✓	
	(9) There are different views on the academic autonomy of academic course team members.	✓		✓	✓	

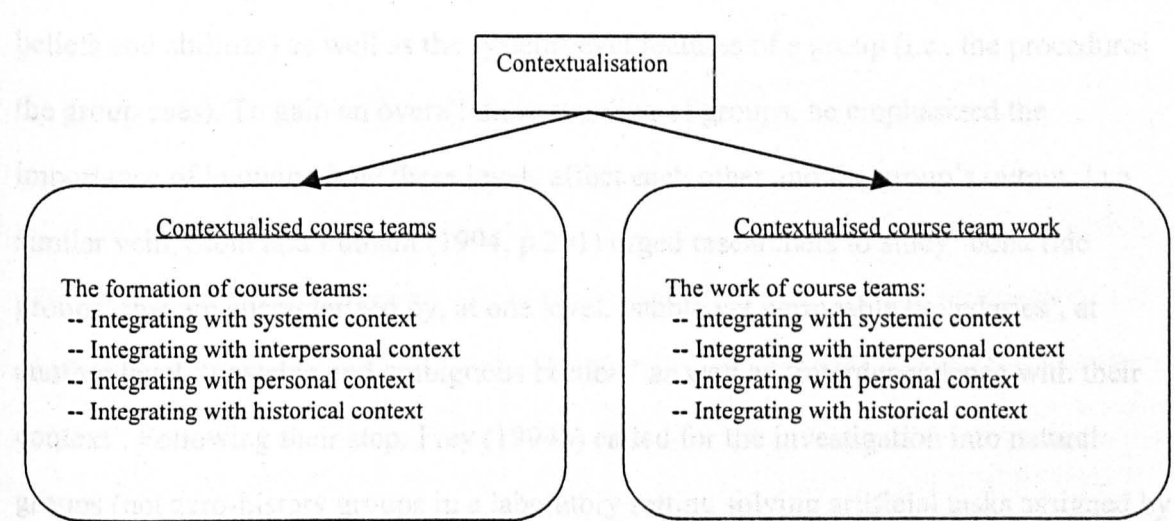
The conclusions contain the following two notions: (1) context; (2) contextualisation.

Regarding 'context', this study is signified by the emergence of the following four contexts. (1) The 'systemic context', which refers to the course team itself, the department/centre, the faculty/school, the university and the country. (2) The 'interpersonal context', that includes the interpersonal relationships between course team members. (3) The 'personal context', which consists of personality, beliefs, professional abilities, experiences and personal interests. (4) The 'historical context', which is located in the historical roots of the above three contexts. Table 8-2 lists these four contexts.

[Table 8- 2] Contexts of Course Teams and Their Work

Contexts of Course Teams and Their Work	
Systemic context	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Course team itself • Department/Centre • Faculty/School • University • Country
Interpersonal context	• Interpersonal relationships between course team members
Personal context	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personality • Beliefs and professional abilities • Experiences and personal interests
Historical context	• The historical roots of the above three contexts

With respect to ‘*contextualisation*’, it applies to the membership of a course team and to the work of a course team. The definition of contextualisation in this study is that *course teams as well as their work interact with contexts*. This means that *the formation of course teams as well as the work of course teams is affected by contexts*. *Vice versa, course teams also influence the change of contexts*. The notion of ‘contextualisation’ is illustrated in figure 8-4.



[Figure 8- 4] Contextualised Course Teams and Their Work

The above figure tells that course teams do not work in a vacuum. Course teams develop and conduct their work by interacting with their contexts. Because of integration, not only contexts affect course teams as well as their work, but course teams also stimulate their contexts to change. An example of contextualisation is that the course teams of the UKOU are affected by University’s system for course construction; the system is modified with the influence from course teams.

After providing the conclusions, this section next discusses the theme of the conclusions, namely, context/contextualisation.

8.3.2 Discussion on the theme of conclusions -- context/contextualisation

Context/contextualisation is the theme of the conclusions of this study. Have other scholars tackled the issue of context/contextualisation? The following discussions are based on the literature on small groups as well as on educational studies.

Scholars who specialise in small groups gradually address the importance of context. For instance, Wilson (1999, p.22) believed that the study of small group communication is best understood when the concepts are presented with real-life examples within specific contexts. In his model of the small group, he identified the individual-level features of a group (namely, the characteristics that individual members bring in, e.g., members' beliefs and abilities) as well as the system-level features of a group (i.e., the procedures the group uses). To gain an overall understanding of groups, he emphasized the importance of knowing how these levels affect each other and the group's output. In a similar vein, Stohl and Putnam (1994, p.291) urged researchers to study 'bona fide groups' that are characterised by, at one level, 'stable yet permeable boundaries', at another level, 'unstable and ambiguous borders' as well as 'interdependence with their context'. Following their step, Frey (1994b) called for the investigation into natural groups (not zero-history groups in a laboratory setting solving artificial tasks assigned by researchers). In his view, the real-life groups mirror the significant contextual factors that impinge on groups in the real world (e.g., a group's decision-making history, members' relationships and a group's position in the hierarchy of an organisation). To respond to the advocacy, Barge and Keyton (1994) in their case study demonstrated how the historical and political processes underlying a government policy-making group influence the discussions of council issues. By rejecting an objectivist view of the environment (i.e., context as an objective entity independent of group interaction), they adopted the notion of 'enacted context' arguing that the context is an enacted

phenomenon. With contextual themes, they viewed groups as embedded social entities that enact their own context.

In comparison, the above-mentioned literature supports the conclusions of this study. This is because the referred literature also highlights the systemic, interpersonal, personal and historical contexts as well as the interaction between groups and contexts. What the literature advocates -- to study the groups in natural settings within specific contexts -- is what this study has actually done. Like the literature, this study argues that course teams are the social entities embedded in their context, too.

Not only scholars in the field of small groups, but also the scholars in the field of education increasingly discuss the issue of social context. For instance, Keddie (1971) distinguished the 'teacher context' (i.e., teacher's routine daily contact with pupils in the classroom and all the practical activities surrounding it, such as lesson planning and marking) from the 'educationist context' (i.e., a context of discussing school policies by drawing educational theory and research). By applying Keddie's notion to this study, the course team meeting becomes a kind of 'educationist context', because the academics in course team meetings discuss various matters related to their courses.

Cornbleth (1990) highlighted the importance of context to curriculum, by drawing literature, her own experiences of developing curriculum and her field studies. Similar to Keddie, she also identified different categories of context. Both the 'structural' (i.e., systemic) and 'sociocultural' (i.e., extra-systemic) contexts are identified by her. The structural context refers to established roles and relationships, including operating procedures, norms and shared beliefs. The sociocultural context means demographic, social, political and economic conditions, traditions, ideologies and events that influence curriculum. Cornbleth pointed out that these two contexts are overlapping and interacting. They are better seen as nested layers than as separate concentric circles. In Cornbleth's mind, curriculum is contextually shaped. Criticised by her, the curriculum developed by following Tyler's technocratic model is conceptually de-contextualised. Generally speaking, Cornbleth's central argument -- curriculum as contextualised social

process -- is worth mentioning. But, her proposal is not completely derived from empirical studies. This weakens the strength of her claim.

Seddon (1993, 1995) studied context and education. His major report is constructed by mainly surrounding an historical case study (which is based on his doctoral research). From conducting the studies, he noticed that the concept of context has shifted from being used as the backdrop towards being used to capture or represent a reality. This change signifies the departure from 'categorical contextualism' to 'relational contextualism' (or 'practice-based contextualism'). Regarding the latter, the relational way of seeing the world treats 'context' as a social realm and as a constitutive part of education. By recognising the change, he proposed a move beyond context toward a relational theory and practice of educational formation and re-formation. This move highlights the investigation into the social history of formation and transformation. Generally speaking, Seddon's argument is powerful. His investigation is useful to this study.

Differences exist in the studies of Seddon and Cornbleth. For instance, Seddon's analysis focused on the conceptions of context, e.g., the categorical conception of context and the relational practice-based conception of context. He paid no attention to the coding of various types of context. By contrast, Cornbleth highlighted two types of contexts of curriculum, i.e., the structural context and the sociocultural context, although she claimed that the curriculum, constructed and re-constructed in situated practice, is a contextualised social process.

Common features can be found in Cornbleth and Seddon's investigations. For example, Cornbleth argued that curriculum is not context free while Seddon similarly argued that education is not context free. Even if context is examined as the external force or as the integral part, curriculum/education cannot be investigated by ignoring context. Moreover, the interplay between education/curriculum and context was highlighted by both of them. This recognition provides a supportive rationale for interpreting the conclusions of this study.

What do the studies reviewed above mean to the current study? Four implications are pointed out below.

(1) This study adopts the notion of 'contextualisation', the idea also implied in the studies of Cornbleth and Seddon. The use of contextualisation signifies that both the course teams and their work are context-dependent. This means that the separation of contexts from the course teams and their work is rejected by this study. Since the course teams and their work are so tightly woven into the contexts, contexts are not the outside layers of course teams and their work, like the layers of an onion. Rather, contexts -- just like the encounters that produce new outcomes as preludes to further encounters (Seddon, 1993, pp.31-32) -- shape and are shaped by course teams and their work. In other words, course teams and their work are actually commensurate with, but not contained by, contexts.

(2) The contexts of course teams and their work are both categorised in this study although the limitation of the categorical conception of context pointed out by Seddon is understood. The suggestion of various contexts in this study is mainly for the convenience of explaining the final result, which Seddon (1993, p.37) also agrees by saying that the 'categorical analysis can be useful in analysis'.

(3) The number of and the types of categories suggested by this study are different from Keddie's and Cornbleth's. Keddie's 'educationist context' that highlights the discussion in school based on educational theory and research can be linked with the course team meeting. Cornbleth's 'structural context' is similar to the 'systemic context' suggested in this study. Her second context, i.e., the 'sociocultural context', is broader than the 'interpersonal context' identified as particularly crucial to the conclusion of this study.

Furthermore, the 'personal context' that is suggested in this study is not the focus of either Keddie or Cornbleth. The existence of this context can be slightly linked with the studies conducted by Nicodemus (1984, 1992a, 1992b) reviewed in section 2.5.2 because in his reports both the dynamics of a course team and course team member's feelings towards their work are addressed. Neither Keddie nor Cornbleth mentions the 'historical

context’, but Seddon (1993) promoted the examination of the historical process of educational change. The existence of the ‘historical context’ also gets support from Goodson (1993, 1994) who conducted a number of case studies for tracing the history and construction of school subjects.

(4) This study does not suggest other contexts of course team work, e.g., media (Mason, 1994). This is because they are not evident from the data. Although the categories of context claimed by this study are limited, they show the practical facet of formulating the course teams and their work.

The notions of context and contextualisation in this study as well as in the studies of Keddie, Cornbleth and Seddon are summarised in table 8-3.

[Table 8- 3] Comparison of the Studies of Context and Contextualisation in Education

Study	Context	Contextualisation
Keddie's (1971)	Two contexts: (1) teacher context (2) educationist context	--
Cornbleth's (1990)	• Two contexts: (1) structural context (2) sociocultural context	• Curriculum is as a contextualised social process.
Seddon's (1993, 1995)	• Two conceptions of context: (1) Categorical conception: Seddon thought that context should not be categorised. (2) Relational practice-based conception: This is what Seddon preferred to take to look at the relationship between education and context.	• Seddon did not think that education is in context. But, in his idea, the investigation should focus on the practices and processes of educational formation and reformation.
This study (Chung, 2001)	• Four contexts: (1) systemic context (2) personal context (3) interpersonal context (4) historical context	• Contextualised course teams & contextualised work of course teams

The above comparison shows that the identification of contexts and contextualisation in this study supports some aspects of earlier mentioned studies. However, it also signifies that this study is different from them because it extends Cornbleth and Keddie’s categories of context and re-shapes Seddon’s claim for the study of practices and processes of educational formation and reformation by incorporating the categories of contexts. Nevertheless, this study provides a vivid example to the notion of

contextualisation implied in Cornbleth and Seddon's studies but with the particular focus on course teams and their work.

8.3.3 Discussion on conclusions -- contextualised course teams

The term of 'contextualised course teams' means that the formation of course teams interacts with the systemic, interpersonal, personal and historic contexts. To discuss the phenomenon, the literature on organisations as well as on the cultural perspective of education is used.

The interplay between the formation of course teams and the 'systemic context' can be discussed by taking the *mechanistic-rational approach* (or the *classical approach*) in the study of organisations (see Burns, 1996). The approach emphasizes the scientific design of organisations and the administrative apparatus to enforce the ruling élite's authority. Analysed by adopting this approach, the UKOU's system for course construction possesses the features of Taylor's scientific management and Weber's bureaucracy. Conceived as a machine, the system for course construction possesses the characteristics of 'machine bureaucracy' (Mintzberg, 1983) -- it standardises the procedure of setting up the course team with the purpose of controlling the work of course development and production. For organizing the course team, the working units in various bureaucratic levels of university (e.g., the department/centre, the faculty/school and the Office for Curriculum Development in the university level) following the principle of hierarchy possess their distinct functions. And they are allocated different working time in the whole working schedule of the system. The course team has in these ways become the product of the rational system.

There are two ways to discuss the influences of both 'interpersonal context' and 'personal context' on the formation of course teams. First is the view of the '*human relations approach*' in organisational studies, which highlights that organisations are the complex social systems and that both communication and motivation are important to organisations (see Burns, 1996). Following this approach, the course team is not simply a

rational entity. The course team members themselves as well as the relationships between them become critical to the formation of course teams. Two major studies in this approach can be used to compare the conclusions of this study. First is Mayo's Hawthorne experiments (see Burns, 1996). The implication of Mayo's study for the present research is that both the culture and informal structure of course teams are influential to its formation. The second is McGregor's theory Y (see Burns, 1996), which tells us that the commitment to course teams pushes the core course team members to take more roles and responsibilities. Both these studies tell us that the personal and interpersonal contexts are the ones that construct the actual course team's life. The social process among course team members does formulate the course teams.

The second approach to discuss the influence of 'interpersonal context' as well as of 'personal context' on the formation of course teams, is to use the notion of *contingency theory approach* in organisational studies. The contingency theory stresses that the structure of an organisation is dependent ('contingent') on the variables other than the system (see Burns, 1996). If analysed using this approach, the course team is dependent on the flows of personnel and others in the environment. The University's system for course construction is not the only influential factor for the formation of course teams. The internal dependence, highlighted by Thompson (see Burns, 1996), between course team members also shapes course teams. Like the organisation with organic structure suggested by Burns and Stalker (see Burns, 1996), the course team adjusts and continually re-defines its tasks and member's responsibility.

The course team members, as in the group with *adhocracy culture* (Thorne & Cuthbert, 1996, p.189), play an important role in formulating the teams and fulfilling the requirement given by the University. The academic course team members as the members of their 'academic tribe' (Becher, 1989) bring the particular culture of academics into course teams. Also, the disciplinary culture (Becher, 1994; Clark, 1980) is visible in operating course teams. In other words, course teams in different disciplines may perform differently. In this study, since the course teams investigated are from the

same School, they work, in certain aspect, similarly and they face some common problems.

The relationship between the formation of course teams and the 'historical context' can be examined by adopting *the contingency approach* as well. The age of the organisation and its history are treated as situational variables by contingency theorists. By adopting this view, the historical variables affect the formation of course teams.

8.3.4 Discussion on conclusions -- contextualised course team work

'Contextualised course team work' means that course team work intertwines with the systemic, interpersonal, personal and historical contexts. This phenomenon can be seen from the flood of practical concerns in course team meetings. The discussion on 'contextualised course team work' will be based on the literature on academic/teacher's work in higher education, in schools and in open and distance education.

Regarding the notion of work, Grint (1991) argued that work itself is socially constructed and reconstructed through the interpretive acts of agents involved. What counts as work, according to Grint, cannot be separated from the context within which it exists, and context changes through space and time. About the academic's work in higher education, Halsey and Trow (1971), who undertook a large-scale investigation of British academics in the 1960s, identified the changing role of British academics under the early expansion of higher education. Halsey (1992, p.136) later on pointed out the gradual proletarianization of the academic profession and the increased move of managerialism to the centre of collegiate co-operation in the organisation of teaching. The loss of skill or craft or traditional knowledge becomes the major aspect of proletarianization. Following the trend in industry, teaching has been changing in its labour process by the rise of specialised or managerial staff. Middlehurst and Barnett (1994) analysing the changes in higher education in the UK similarly pointed out that the changes make many academics lose their sense of professional identity and autonomy. Bocock (1994) also claimed that the increased diversity within universities brings a broadening of the responsibilities of

lecturers, which generates the sense of academic devaluation. Bocock and Watson (1994a) urged for the renewal of professional identities and professional roles of the academics in British universities. Smyth (1995b, p.2) discussed the change of the labour process of academic work -- such as how the work is organised -- with a changed society. Miller (1995) argued, in the light of the detected phenomenon of de-skilling for ordinary academics, that academics' work is becoming fragmented.

In schools, the teacher's work has undergone similar change. For instance, Bowles and Gintis (1976) pointed out that the teaching job in the USA, following the expansion of capital, is already fragmented in the interest of scientific management. Ozga and Lawn (1988) highlighted the loss of control over the definition of the teacher's work as well. Lawn & Ozga (1981) claimed that the teacher's work, like other kinds of work, is a means of survival (paid employment) and a service. Meighan (1986, pp.39-48) even suggested the analogy of 'the teacher as victim' to portray the distortions of a teacher's work by emphasising constraints, limited choices and imposed conditions of work.

The scholars in the field of open and distance education also discuss the academic's work. For instance, Rumble (1995a, p.10) believed that the work which involves the carrying out of tasks becomes a complex in modern society and is completed by the method of division of labour. Jarvis (1996) thought that Rumble (1995a) was correct because Rumble analysed the nature of work by focusing on the division of labour and specialisation. In the follow-up remarks, Rumble (1996) emphasized that teaching in the era of knowledge explosion becomes subject to increased division and specialisation of labour. However, Rumble (1988) also detected that the academics in distance teaching universities tend to perceive their work based on the way conventional universities are organised. Even so, in his analysis, the traditional role of the academic is, due to the course team model, still constrained by the need to match the working patterns of administrative and production staff who have a professional loyalty to their own departments. Champion and Renner (1995) in Australia, drawing on the history of the engineering profession in the USA at the turn of the century, also examined academics' work. They firstly saw that the engineers, who were forced from small draft-like shops

into becoming wage labourers in large corporations, eagerly embraced scientific management into their work to keep some authority over their work. They thus argued that academics are like the engineers in that they also adopted technical approaches. Elsewhere, Campion (1996a, p.159), by applying Halsey's (1992) argument into open and distance education, pointed out the gradual proletarianization of the academic professions in open and distance education.

The above-mentioned literature supports, by comparison, the claim of 'contextualised course team work'. The flood of practical concerns in course team meetings detected in this study signifies that the academic course team members no longer only carry out academic work because they also do non-academic work. On the one hand, academic course team members in the process of course development do not work on the full range of traditional academic work. Thus, taking the traditional view on academic work, they are de-skilled. On the other hand, academic course team members do some work that is different from traditional academic work. In this sense, they have gained more skills. It can be said that academic course team members conduct both academic and practical work. The real course team work is contextualised by interacting with contexts.

8.3.5 Discussion on the transferability of conclusions

Although this study adopts a naturalistic paradigm and focuses on cases taken from a single organisation, according to grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1990), the conclusions of this study are grounded into empirical data and are the results of theorisation. Thus, the conclusions are abstract. The theorising stage provides useful insights into the practice of course team approach. This nature makes the conclusions helpful to, with the awareness of disciplinary cultures (Becher, 1994), the course teams in both the same School and other faculties/schools at the UKOU and in other educational institutions.

Can the conclusions of this study be helpful to a teaching situation that does not adopt the course team approach? The phenomenon of contextualisation can be found out in

conventional classroom teaching situations as well. However, this study shows that the course team approach is characterised by contextualisation. This is because the process of the formation of course teams is contextualised by, for example, the system for course production set up by the university. The work of course teams is also contextualised, as has been observed in this study. Thus, as a whole this study concludes that the course team approach is characterised by the phenomenon of contextualisation.

Can the conclusions of this study be helpful to the latest practice in open and distance education? Since the conclusions address the nature of the course team approach, no matter how the form of course teams has changed, this study can still be used to shed light on the relevant issues. The implication of the conclusions can be understood by taking an example from the recent new type of course teams. An international course team for the online Master of Distance Education / Certificate in Distance Education (Carl von Ossietzky University of Oldenburg, 2000) is organised by academics residing in the USA, Germany, Sweden, Canada and the UK. To provide the courses for the programme that is offered by the University of Maryland University College in the USA in partnership with the Carl von Ossietzky University of Oldenburg in Germany, the course team members need to communicate mainly via the Internet with occasionally face-to-face meetings. Thus, their working pattern is different from the traditional UKOU course teams investigated in this study. However, the international course team still needs to consider its systemic, interpersonal, personal and historical contexts. This means that the course team has to follow the existing systems for course provision set up in these two host universities. The interpersonal relationships between course team members still play a key role in keeping the team in shape. The personal attributes of course team members, e.g., available time and existing publication, do affect the construction of the courses. And its working pattern reflects the historical roots of their interpersonal relationships and personal expertise in the field. Thus, the conclusions of the present study, which identified the key features of course team work, can be helpful to the latest practice in open and distance education.

8.3.6 Discussion on the research issue -- the nature of the course team approach

This study concludes that course teams are contextualised and their work is also contextualised. Based on the conclusions, the nature of the course team approach is discussed below.

(1) The attributes of academics play a vital role in the course team approach. The team members of a course team are mainly academics. If academic team members do not do their work properly during the whole process of course construction, the course teams as well as their courses may face troubles.

The non-stop commitment of academic team members is a key to enable the presentation of courses on time; and the commitment of academic team members relates to their status of employment in the institutions that offer the courses. Although it is possible for part-time academic team members to work well for distance teaching institutions, this study suggests that a course team would benefit by including full-time academics as core members. This is because full-time academic team members are better able to rescue the courses from crisis situations and help to provide the course on schedule in the end. In this sense, full-time academic team members are more likely to become the core members of their teams and deal with contingencies. The core full-time academic team members hence possess vaguely demarcated responsibility.

Although academic team members are commonly invited to join course teams based on their academic ability, they also bring in their personality and feelings to their teams, which may intervene in their work in the teams. Furthermore, since the time for constructing a course is usually quite long, academic team members are hardly able to use all their time to only work for this particular course by putting aside all their other work and personal life. Therefore, during the period of course construction, there can be instances where the most knowledgeable and competent team member may create problems to his/her team, owing to the contextual circumstances. All theses tell that the

personal aspect of academic team members can affect the success in adopting the course team approach.

Academics, as the members of academic tribe, collectively possess the characteristics of the community. Academics in course teams, following academic tradition, may easily produce their course materials merely against academic criteria particularly if they are concerned about the criticism raised by other academics after their courses are offered. They are likely to overlook students' needs and dilute the provision of pedagogy in course materials. This academic's collective tribal feature cannot be overlooked once the course team approach is adopted.

(2) Teamwork is essential to the course team approach. People working together and exchanging ideas can stimulate the creation of new thoughts. This is what a team is set up for. And this approach enables the course team to produce a course which has been well-discussed before the course is formally presented.

The teamwork of course teams can be easily detected in team meetings. In some educational institutions, e.g., the NOU in Taiwan, course teams only hold a couple of team meetings during the whole process of course construction. In these occasional meetings, the issues discussed are limited to certain aspects of work. One reason for this is that it is the conventional working pattern that has lasted for a number of years in the institution. The other reason is that teams themselves do not think that there is a need to have more team meetings. They, with the preconception that academics have the ability to work independently, avoid the interaction between and the criticism from team members. In other educational institutions, e.g., the UKOU, course teams comparatively hold much more team meetings; and they comparatively have wider discussions that cover both academic and practical issues. With the frequent communication between team members and the broad considerations provided by course teams, courses are thoroughly discussed that should be more suitable for students to study.

Teamwork relates to how teams are grouped. Some course teams are loosely grouped. For them, teamwork is limited with only little communication between team members.

Some course teams hardly produce teamwork. In this kind of course teams, academic team members mainly produce their course materials alone without discussing with other team members. But, their course materials still need to be put together as one course in the end. Without proper discussions between team members, the course might face the danger of fragmentation. On the contrary, some course teams are tightly grouped. For them, a lot of teamwork is going on. From the frequent teamwork, team members build their interpersonal relationships.

Regarding the interpersonal relationships between team members, this study highlights the importance of team members' experience of working together before their work in current course teams. Sometime the prior working experiences are useful for current course teams although they sometimes exert unhealthy influences on current teams. To adopt the course team approach, the history of working together cannot be ignored.

(3) The system for course construction set up by the educational institution is crucial for the course team approach. The course team is grouped with a special task that is course construction, particularly course development. This study emphasizes that course development comprises both academic and practical activities and that the development of a high-quality course involves a considerable amount of activities. Although course teams in different institutions are required to conduct different amount of activities and some course teams carry out fewer activities, course development is still not a simple and easy work. The most undesirable ending for a course team is the inability to offer the course because certain course materials are not ready. Thus, the most important target for course teams is to be able to provide the courses on time. The system for course construction is set up to monitor the work of course teams.

No matter how simple/complicated the system is, course teams, as the cells of their organisation, need to follow the rules provided by the system. Under the circumstances, course teams are no longer the groups of people who do whatever they want. Their academic autonomy is, to certain extent, controlled.

Moreover, course teams in the system cannot avoid being involved in the work of course management and course production. This study demonstrates that academic team members are dragged into the discussions on various practical issues. The emergence of practical work switches the attention of academic team members away from academic work. Although the range of practical issues that course teams have to deal with is different in different institutions, academic team members in any sense cannot merely carry out academic work in course teams. This is because its work (i.e., course construction) in nature comprises practical work.

Although the system for course construction frames the work of course teams, on the other hand it guides course teams to construct courses. For instance, the UKOU uses the UCA forms (and the subsequent alternative methods) to lead course teams to consider various pedagogical issues. Therefore, a well-developed system can raise the overall quality of the work of course teams and consequently can make courses developed with high quality.

As a whole, the claim of contextualised course teams and their work provides a new perspective to look at the issue of course teams. This perspective implies that the issue of course teams should be tackled by taking both macro and micro views. This is because a course team is in reality an organism composed of human beings that grows and changes by interacting with its inner and outer contexts. Since both course teams and their work are the products of contexts, the contexts as well as the phenomenon of contextualisation cannot be ignored if a distance teaching institution attempts to adopt the course team approach. Therefore to adopt the course team approach successfully, we need to take particular account of academic's attributes, teamwork and the system for course construction set up by the distance teaching institution.

8.4 Reflections on the conduct of the study

What has the researcher learnt from conducting the study? The answer roots in what the researcher has found out from the study and how she has carried out the study. In this section, the researcher's reflections cover the following three areas.

- Implications of the study for policy making
- Contributions of the study
- Suggestions to further studies

8.4.1 Implications of the study for policy making

In Chapter 1, the importance of the study has been suggested. In the end of the thesis, the examination of the importance should be provided. The importance of the study can be found out from the implications of the study for policy making. The implications are divided into the following four groups.

- For the new programmes in the field of open and distance education
- For the conventional higher education institutions which consider the inclusion of distance teaching into their educational provision
- For the UKOU
- For the NOU in Taiwan and other existing distance-teaching practices in the globe

For the new programmes in the field of open and distance education

Following the development of open and distance education, people in different parts of the globe consider setting up new programmes on open and distance education. The planners should be aware of the following five implications of this study.

- (1) From this study, the myth of ideal course teams needs to be eliminated. There is no perfect course team. A course team that can function well should be organised by a

well-developed system. The interpersonal relationships between course team members should be helpful to the development of good course materials. Some academics work better alone than in a team. Course team members should be good at teamwork, e.g., communication, able to give and take constructive criticisms. And the manager of the institution should be aware of the issue of aging happening to the institution, to staff's interpersonal relationships and to the area of expertise etc of individual course team members. In other words, if a course team can work well within the contextual constraints and if the various contexts are helpful for its development, it could be an effective course team. The good interaction between a course team and its contexts can ensure the adoption of the course team approach as well. Moreover, taking Quinn's (1988, p.165) argument -- managers have to move beyond rational management by tolerating, considering and employing both the purposive and holistic frames -- an effective course team needs to notice and cope with both systemic and non-systemic contexts.

- (2) The conclusions of this study suggest that there is no need to make exact copies of the UKOU course teams. The complete transplantation of UKOU's experience does not guarantee the success of a course team in other contexts. Instead, the understanding of the feature of contextualisation is important for the use of the course team approach. A course team is a product of various contexts. Also, a course team itself is a context. The UKOU's course teams are formed in and work in particular contexts. This makes the performance of UKOU's course teams distinct. Thus, the planner of these institutions should understand this point before they decide whether to adopt the course team approach or not.
- (3) From the identification of the historical context by this study, the planners of new programmes should carefully make strategies for the offering of course materials to students. A good start can reduce difficulties in the latter stages of development. It is not easy for an institution with a long history of a particular approach to change its approach. Since this study tells that course teams as well as their work are affected by the factor of time, the planners of these institutions need to plan thoroughly in the

beginning of a system for course production that offers good course materials to students in the future.

(4) Since this study shows that the operation of course teams relates to how an institution runs its system, the planners should analyse the experience of existing distance teaching institutions and understand the nature of the course team approach in order to make decisions which match their own features. As the present study has examined, having course teams has strengths and weaknesses. A course can be developed well by a course team. But it is not always the case. The performance of the course team is affected by a number of factors, such as the support it receives from the host institution. The very idea of having a course team can be defeated when such support mechanisms are not available. The ill operation of institutions and the lack of tight connection between course teams and institutions can hinder the strength of course teams. Therefore, learning from other course teams can avoid difficulties in the future. Once the decision to adopt the course team approach is made, the planners of new programmes need to understand how to make the best use of their course teams.

(5) From the identification of the importance of the personal context, the planners of new programmes should set the criteria for recruiting academic staff based on the skills needed for course team work if they decide to use course teams to construct courses. Not all academics are suitable for course team work. For the success of course teams, the planners of these institutions should understand the issue of course teams, such as the importance of interpersonal relationships between course team members, and then try their best to employ academic staff who can make course teams work well.

For the conventional higher education institutions which consider the inclusion of distance teaching into their educational provision

In contemporary society, a rapidly growing number of conventional higher education institutions intend to provide courses by distance mode, using new information and

communication technology. For these institutions, this study has the following three implications.

(1) The course team approach can be adopted for the development of on-line courses. (a)

For the courses that are partly on-line and that also contain the element of printed course materials, the process for course teams to develop printed course materials is similar to that of conventional distance teaching courses. (b) For the courses that are completely on-line, the course team approach can still be adopted since the web pages that contain course materials need to be produced. On-line courses often use the systems of conferencing and e-mail to stimulate on-line discussion and communication. Literature, e.g., Rowntree (1995), shows that academics spend considerable time on this work. If the academics that are responsible for on-line discussion and communication are treated as course team members, on-line courses need more academics. This makes the team approach necessary.

(2) To have full-time academic staff in course teams can make course teams work efficiently. This study shows that course teams prefer to have more permanent academic staff in teams because, for instance, permanent academic staff can provide more input to the course. Conventional higher education institutions have the potential of deploying adequate numbers of permanent academics in their course teams; compared with distance teaching institutions, the conventional institutions that provide face-to-face teaching tend to have more permanent academic staff. Thus, conventional higher education institutions are better positioned to have course teams with more permanent academic staff. The permanent academic staff members in conventional higher education institutions however, tend to have full work schedules. Thus, their workload needs to be rescheduled in order to allow enough time to develop courses in course teams.

(3) It is possible to have on-line course teams. By using the Internet and with a thorough plan, academics who are located in either different institutions or different parts of the globe can still make their course teams work. To make on-line course teams work

well, management becomes much more important because face-to-face course team meetings in real meeting rooms may not take place.

For the UKOU

The UKOU is the place where this study is carried out. This study provides two implications to the UKOU.

- (1) The identification of the systemic and historical contexts by this study suggests that one way for the UKOU to continue its success is to continue to modify its system for course construction in order to meet the latest needs and trends. This study implies that the UKOU's sophisticated system for course construction, which was well set up in the earliest time of the University, has contributed to the success of UKOU's courses. As what has been mentioned in Chapter 4, the UKOU has been adjusting its system for course construction in various degrees from time to time. For instance, the latest 'University Curriculum Plan' (Open University, 2000) submitted to the Senate of the University points out the recent increasing emphasis on awards rather than courses. With this new interest, the University's awards in future will be specified based on learning outcomes. These trends will have implications for the nature of courses. The new development will inevitably restrict course team's flexibility to some extent. The constraint that the future UKOU course teams might face from the new interests exemplifies the concept of contextualised course teams and echoes the conclusions of this study. Since both British society and the world change very fast, the UKOU's system for course construction needs to be adjusted to a faster speed. Only when the University understands clearly its position in the current time, its courses can be constructed based on latest needs.
- (2) The deans of faculties/schools of the UKOU need to take account of the interpersonal relationships between course team members and the factor of time on them. The UKOU now has considerable senior staff members. Its staff members, particularly the senior ones, have already built up the mutual understanding by working together in

various occasions in the course of a number of years. Since this study demonstrates the importance of the interpersonal relationships between course team members to course team work, the deans of faculties/schools should take this factor into account and try to cultivate a better atmosphere for their staff members in order to obtain better quality of teamwork.

For the NOU in Taiwan and other existing distance-teaching practices in the globe

The NOU in Taiwan together with other existing distance-teaching practices in the globe can learn from this study, too. There are three implications for them.

- (1) The conclusions of this study suggest that there are a number of ways to improve course team work. For instance, the system for course construction can be adjusted; the positive discussion between course team members should be encouraged. The recruitment of academic staff can be conducted by setting the criteria which meet the needs of course teams, e.g., the ability to work in a team. Efforts can be made to improve the interpersonal relationships between course team members, for instance, the arrangement of non-formal group activities.
- (2) It is worth understanding the practice of course teams at the UKOU. This study demonstrates that the UKOU's model does show certain strengths of the course team approach, such as the detailed plan for course development, the constant discussion between course team members, and so on. Thus, to learn the experience of the UKOU can help with the improvement of existing practices.
- (3) It is necessary to understand the cultural differences between the UK and the researcher's own country, which are shown in course team work. British academics are used to having debates and commenting on each other's work. This feature can be seen from course team work. However, the personal experience of the researcher suggests that the academics in course teams of the NOU in Taiwan do not tend to take criticisms favourably. This may be the case in other distance teaching

universities in countries with similar cultures. Thus, the effect of teamwork might be affected by national character.

8.4.2 Contributions of the study

The 'course team' approach has been noticeably adopted since 1969 when the OU was set up. During these three decades, most discussions on 'course teams' converged around the time of 1970s and early 1980s. Afterwards, there was little new literature on this issue. However, the use of the 'course team' approach still currently exists in many distance-teaching institutions in the globe. And this approach still plays an important role in developing courses. Therefore, the issue is still worth being investigated. And this research is carried out with a hope of providing some implications to the practitioners who have the experiences of applying the 'course team' approach. As a whole, the following three contributions can be identified from the conduct of this study.

- (1) Theorisation of a practice with an attempt to understand the nature of the course team approach is a contribution to the existing knowledge. The review of the literature shows that there is a lack of theorisation about the course team approach. To carry out this study itself is thus a contribution. To conclude 'contextualisation' as a feature of the course team approach can contribute to theory as well.
- (2) The observation of course team work as well as the analysis of observation data to explore issue of course teams is a contribution. The review of the literature shows that the observations of course team work are needed. This study observed and analysed how course teams work in course team meetings. This kind of study is needed to the practice.
- (3) The conduct of a doctoral study that investigates the UKOU's course teams from the eyes of an overseas research student is a contribution. Most of UKOU's academic staff members are busy in developing their courses and carrying out other work. The heavy workload means there is lack of time to investigate their practice. This study

thus can fill the gap. Since the researcher comes from the same type of institution but from a different country, the differences derived from contexts are apparent for her. The role of the researcher hence influences the transferability of the conclusions.

8.4.3 Suggestions to further studies

There are four suggestions given for further studies.

- (1) The course team approach is worth further investigation. As pointed out in Chapter 1, there is not much literature on course teams that is based on empirical research, although a considerable number of distance teaching institutions have already set up their own form of course teams. It is a danger if we just adopt the course team approach without understanding its nature. Therefore, more research into course teams is needed.
- (2) Comparative studies between different practices of course teams are recommended. From comparisons, the nature of the course team approach could be understood further.
- (3) Regarding methodology, to conduct a qualitative research about course teams is recommended. This is because the adoption of a naturalist paradigm can capture the lifelike reality of course teams. For carrying out the studies, observation is a useful method to understand course teams. The use of a tape recorder in observation can reduce difficulties for future data analysis.
- (4) With respect to the stage of course construction that can be investigated, the future studies can focus on the later stages of course construction, e.g., the discussions on various drafts of course materials in course team meetings. For understanding what course team members are talking about, to have the relevant academic background might be an advantage for researchers. Another way to investigate the issue of course teams is to follow a course from the very beginning to the end during the whole

process of course construction. However, if researches are designed in this way, researchers need much more time to conduct the project. Time constraints would make this difficult for a PhD research.

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**Appendix: The Course Planning Calendar of the
UKOU**

The Course Planning Calendar of the UKOU (in 1992)

COURSE PLANNING CALENDAR

This calendar provides a schedule for all the activities relating to the preparation of new or remade courses for first presentation in year P, including course planning, resource assessment and the various bidding and approval processes for course components. The schedule applies to courses in all programmes - BA, Certificate, Diploma, Masters and Associate. (The course resource items are particular to the undergraduate programme, but resource planning for other programmes will need to take place in the same timescale.)

Course Teams are asked to note:

- (i) the importance of the preliminary discussions specified with relevant areas before formal documents are submitted, so that options and plans are discussed in early outline form rather than delayed until they have been refined.
- (ii) the need to alert relevant areas at the earliest possible stage if it is felt that a particular deadline may not be met.
- (iii) further information on course/development and production may be obtained from the Course Production Handbook.
- (iv) in certain circumstances non-undergraduate courses have followed an abbreviated development and production timetable. Any such departures from the Calendar should be discussed and agreed on a course by course basis with the areas concerned.

YEAR P-7

Proposer to discuss course with Dean and Head of Discipline/Programme Board Director.

YEAR P-6

Reference to course included in Academic Unit's forward five-year plan.

YEAR P-5

Course plan refined in Unit's forward five-year plan.

YEAR P-4

Course plan further refined to Unit's forward five-year plan.

(January onwards)

Course Team prepares estimate of audio-visual requirements.

(May onwards)

U-Area Sub-Committee considers outline proposals for new U-Courses.

(Oct onwards)

U-Area Sub-Committee further considers new U-Course proposals.

(10-2)

Year P-3

- (Jan to September) Course Teams discuss outline plans for teaching and assessment strategy in consultation with Deputy Academic Registrar (CP&E) in some cases.
- (February) U-Area Sub-Committee recommends to Programme Development Committee U-courses for first presentation in year P.
- (early in year) Academic Units begin consideration of course proposals (UCA1 forms).
- (March/April) Course Teams contact Chair/Secretary of the Collaborative Publishing Sub-Committee on co-publication proposals.
- (late May) Course Teams send UCA10 forms for co-published course material to Courses Office.
- (May/June) Course teams discuss initial broadcasting and audio-visual plans with their unit's senior producer and Sub-Dean or administrator.
- (May/June) Course Teams discuss initial HEK plans with Director WT & DS, Purchasing Manager and Planning Office.
- (June/July) Finance Division issues Ready Reckoner of course development and production costs.
- (June/July) Project Control contacts course teams to discuss Course Production Plans
- (late June/July) Collaborative Publishing Sub-Committee assesses co-publication load for year P and considers UCA10 co-publication proposals.
- (July to September) Course Teams contact Assistant Registrar (Students with Disabilities) to discuss needs of Students with Disabilities.
- (July to early Oct) Course Team discuss computing plans with Director, ACS and Contracts Manager.
- (August/September) Course Teams contact Secretary to BAVSc and their unit's senior producer re broadcast and A/V resource plans if they wish to make a bid centrally to the BAVSC.
- (Sept) Course Teams discuss plans for residential schools with Residential Schools Section.
- (Sept) Draft course production plans prepared by Project Control and course teams
- (late Sept) Academic Unit Boards give final consideration to course proposals (UCA1 form).
- (late Sept/early Oct) production Planning Meeting of Course Team, Faculty, Finance, Operations and Project Control.
- (early October) Course Teams begin preparation of UCA7 Residential School proposal in consultation with Residential Schools Section.
- (early October) Academic Units send UCA1 (course proposal) and UCA3 (external assessor) forms to Office for Programme Development.

Year P-3 (continued)

- (October) Course Teams send UCA11 Course Presentation Strategy form to Senior Assistant Registrar (Teaching and Assessment).
- (mid October) Final Course Production Plan prepared by Project Control and Course Teams.
- (late October) Planning Office issues course population forecasts for year P.
- (late October) UCA1 (Course Proposal) forms sent to services areas.
- (by end October) PVC either (a) gives academic approval to course proposals or (b) refers them to November PDC meeting.
- (by end Oct) Course Teams send first draft of UCA7 to Residential Schools Section.
- (Oct/Nov) Academic Units/Course Teams make initial assessment of development and production resource for new courses.
- (Oct/Dec) Preliminary discussion by EAC and TACC Sub-Group of non-standard teaching and assessment strategies, leading to further discussion with course teams.
- (early Nov) First schedule for production of drafts and handovers produced by Course Managers and Project Control, as part of formal Course Production Plan.
- (early Nov) Academic Units/Course Teams start completing UCA5(a) development and production resource estimate spreadsheets.
- (early Nov) Course Teams send UCA9 (computing resource bid) forms to the Secretary of the Academic Computing Committee.
- (early Nov) Course Production Plan signed off by Course Team.
- (mid Nov) New School Lines Working Group considers first draft of residential school proposals (UCA7 form).
- (mid Nov) Course Production plans considered by production Advisory Group and circulated within University.
- (November) PDC considers academic approval of any new course proposals referred to it by PVC (DS).
- (November) Academic Units send details of their allocations together with any additional broadcast A/V bids on UCA8 form to Secretary to BAVSc.
- (Dec) Service areas send resource assessment of course proposals to Office for Programme Development.
- (Dec) Approval of standard, accepted policy teaching and/or assessment strategies by Deputy Academic Registrar (CP & E).

Year P-3 (continued)

- (Dec) BAVSc considers allocations and bids for broadcast/AV resource.
- (Dec) Course information items entered on SPI.
- (Dec/early Jan) Chair of BAVSc notifies Faculties of confirmed broadcast/AV allocations.

(10-5)

Year P-2

- (mid Jan) Faculties send UCA5(a) development and production resource estimate spreadsheets to Office for Programme Development.
- (Jan-June) Course Teams send to Managing Editor, Book Trade full synopses for co-published texts.
- (late Jan/early Feb) Science and Technology Sub-Deans convene meetings of course teams proposing HEKs with Director, WT&DS and Purchasing Manager.
- (mid-February) Course Teams send final Residential School proposals on UCA7 forms to Residential Schools Section.
- (February) Academic Computing Committee considers UCA9 (Computing resource) bids.
- (February) Office for Programme Development send UCA5(a) development and production resource estimate spreadsheets to service areas.
- (March) Service areas send comments on UCA5(a) development and production resource estimates to Office for Programme Development.
- (March) Planning Office issues update of course population forecasts for year P.
- (March) New School Lines Working Group considers final residential school proposals (UCA7 form).
- (March-June) Course teams discuss HEK Plans with Director, WT&DS and Purchasing Manager.
- (April) Pro-Vice-Chancellor(Programme Development) considers analysis of UCA5(a) (development and production resource estimates) spreadsheets and assessments from service areas.
- (April) Finance Division sets budgets for new and re-made courses.
- (April) Course Teams send tutor qualifications/experience details to Assistant Registrar (Tuition and Counselling).
- (April) Residential Schools Committee considers and approves proposals for summer school lines.
- (April) Course Teams send UCA12 (HEK safety questionnaire) to Courses Office. (April) Course Teams send UCA10 (a) forms for course readers to Courses Office.
- (late April) Course Productions Plans updated re results of resource bids and assessments.

(Year P-2 Continued)

- (May) Course teams agree presentation dates within agreed Academic Year with Project Control.
- (early May) AV production requirements and schedules agreed between course teams and BBC producer.
- (May) Production Routeing meeting held.
- (May) Teaching Materials Safety Group considers UCA12 HEK safety questionnaires.
- (May) Draft production schedules discussed between Project Control and course teams.
- (May) Collaborative Publishing Sub-Committee considers course reader proposals and awards tenders for co-published courses.
- (June) Final date for Academic Units to send outstanding UCA3 forms (external assessor nominations).
- (June) Academic Board considers any outstanding non-standard assessment strategies.
- (July) Examinations and Assessment Committee and Teaching and Counselling Committee will normally have approved teaching and assessment strategy, either as standard, or as new policy following process of consultation with Deputy Academic Registrar (Course Presentation and Examinations), and consideration by Academic Board in exceptional cases.
- Teaching and assessment strategy for some courses may be approved later in P-2, or in P-1, where shorter production schedules are agreed (e.g., externally funded/self-financing courses).
- (early Sept) Course Teams send to Managing Editor, Book Trade full specifications (contents list, word length and sources) for course readers.
- (September) Full schedules for production of print components agreed and issued by Project Control and set up on SPI.
- (October) Start of handover of copy for co-published texts.
- (October) Planning Office issues update of course population forecasts for year P.
- (November) Programme Development Committee considers (in exceptional circumstances) deferral of courses planned for year P.
- (late Nov) Collaborative Publishing Sub-Committee awards tenders for course readers.
- (by Dec) Course Production meetings begin.

Year P-1

- (early January) Course Teams inform Publishing of proposed set books.
- (Jan onwards) Faculties begin preparation of UCA5(b) development and production resource estimate spreadsheets.
- (January) Assistant Secretary (Courses) checks that external assessors have been nominated.
- (January) Deadline for arranging a library guide.
- (late Jan/early Feb) Science and Technology Sub-Deans convene meetings of course teams with Director, WT&DS and Purchasing Manager to discuss Student HEK booklets.
- (late Jan) Deadline for handover of copy for readers.
- (February) Course Teams notify Broadcasting Assistant of course presentation details and broadcast transmission requirements.
- (February) Broadcasting Assistant prepares draft Course Presentation Schedule.
- (late Feb) Faculties send Development and production resource estimate spreadsheets UCA5(b) to Office for Programme Development.
- (March) PVC (DS) and PVC (CE) set course quotas for undergraduate and associate students.
- (March) Planning Office issues update of course population forecasts for year P.
- (March/April) Course Teams discuss HEK Plans with Director, WT&DS and Purchasing Manager.
- (March/April) Course Teams check draft course presentation schedules.
- (early April) Faculties send revised course presentation spreadsheets for year P.
- (April) Deadline for Course Teams to send copy of HEK booklets to Courses Office.
- (April) Service areas receive UCA5(b) development and production resource estimate spreadsheets.
- (May) Teaching Materials Safety Group considers HEK booklets.
- (May) Broadcasting Assistant issues Completed Course Presentation Schedules.
- (May) Broadcasting Assistant prepares schedule of broadcast transmissions.
- (June) Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Programme Development) considers revised UCA5(b) development and production resource estimate spreadsheets and comments from service areas.

Year P-1 Continued

- (June) Course Teams send details of assignment requirements to Deputy Academic Registrar (CP & E).
- (July) Planning Office issues update of course population forecasts for year P.
- (by end July) Course Teams check completed broadcast schedule.
- (August) Planning Office issues update of course population forecasts for year P.
- (August) Course Teams begin to receive and check proofs of Broadcast and Assignment Calendar.
- (September) Faculties send nominations of internal and external examiners on form (on form X401) to Assistant Registrar (Assessment Policy).
- (September) Planning Office issues update of course population forecasts for year P.
- (October) Planning Office issues update of course population forecasts for year P.
- (November) All material for first mailing ready for Tutor briefing mailing, and pre packing for students.

(10-9)

YEAR P

- (early Jan) External Assessor's report on the course sent to PVC (Degree Studies).
- (early Feb) Students begin the course.

- NOTES:
- (i) Many of the dates in this schedule are deadlines relating to activities which can be undertaken earlier. It is helpful both to Course Teams and to administrative and operational areas if initial course proposals and other documents are made available earlier than these deadlines.
 - (ii) Bids for co-publication are required in May of year P-3. Ideally the course proposal (UCA1 form) should be submitted in advance of this.
 - (iii) Supplementary projects, partial remakes involving low resource requirements or low resource courses such as the guided study courses in Social Sciences, or projects where external funding is negotiated at short notice, may be considered at a later stage (but no more than one year later) than in the above schedule, subject to certain conditions.
 - (iv) Planning for U-courses should begin at an early stage ideally, on year earlier than for other courses.
 - (v) service areas will, in general, be asked to make resource assessments on the basis of initial course proposals (UCA1 forms) and course production plans with the opportunity to amend these or comment further when the development and production resource estimate spreadsheets (UCA5 forms) are circulated.

(10-10)